

Huge fire destroys market in Zarqa

AMMAN (J.T.) — Fire broke out in Zarqa's downtown area with flames flaring 10 metres high and covering the sky with black smoke. It is estimated that 200 used clothes shops and a number of cars parked in the garages were destroyed as a result of the fire. The local authorities speeded to the location and started extinguishing the fire that started around 9:30 pm eyewitnesses said. Thousands of watchers blocked the entrance to the fire scene. Zarqa police said the reasons behind the fire remained unknown and inquiries were still underway. Shop owners said the losses reached millions of dinars and observers added the fire would probably continue until the small hours of today, Tuesday. Luckily, the fire did not result in human loss because shops were closed at the time the fire started.

هكذا عنة لطل

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية غير منحازة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Arabs ask Asia to block centre in Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid called Monday for the organisation's 12 Asian members to block the establishment of a centre in Israel for management of regional water resources. Mr. Meguid sent messages to 11-member states and the Palestinians to urge them to oppose such a project, which is expected to be decided at a Beijing meeting on May 13-15 of a U.N. committee in charge of fighting drought. The Asian states concerned are the six Gulf Arab countries, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. "Arab countries refuse to have this centre in Israel because the Jewish state could thus largely influence the water policies of Asia," an Arab League official said. Arab League foreign ministers called in March for a freeze in normalisation with Israel in protest at its construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

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Israeli talks with PNA could harden as a result of scandal

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Palestinians expressed new fears Monday that Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu will harden his stance in the stalemate peace process as he seeks to recover from his narrow brush with indictment for corruption.

"There is no hope of being able to dialogue with Netanyahu, it is a dead end," complained Yasser Abed Rabbo, Palestinian information minister, a day after Israeli prosecutors rejected police recommendations the Israeli premier be put on trial for corruption.

The prosecutors ruled that there was insufficient evidence to indict Mr. Netanyahu for fraud and breach of trust in an influence peddling scandal surrounding the abortive appointment of a political ally as attorney general in January.

As soon as Sunday's ruling by the prosecutors was known, Mr. Netanyahu accused the media and left-wing opposition of blowing up the scandal to topple his government, and he vowed to pursue his nationalist policies.

"They wanted to overthrow us because we are building at Har Homa and oppose the creation of a Palestinian state," Mr. Netanyahu said, referring to the construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem which provoked a violent crisis in the peace process last month.

"These kinds of statements prove his total intransigence," Mr. Abed Rabbo said, saying Mr. Netanyahu had chosen the path of "confrontation instead of cooperation" since coming to power in June.

Palestinian analysts said Mr. Netanyahu's narrow escape from indictment and forced resignation cost him leverage over right-wing elements of his coalition which would have been vital in trying to reach a compromise that could save the peace process.

"Before this decision, Mr. Netanyahu could use the threat of forming a unity government with Labour to keep his opponents in the coalition in line," said Khalil Shikaki, director of the Nablus-based Centre for Palestine Research and Studies.

"But now Labour has rejected joining a unity government and Netanyahu has lost this card," he said.

The Palestinians have publicly agreed to Israeli demands for a crackdown on armed anti-Israel militants but insist in return that peace negotiations can only resume if Israel suspends Jewish settlement building and implements signed agreements requiring it to extend self-rule.

"Netanyahu is naked in his government, he is in no position to offer a compromise over Har Homa, or further troop redeployments from the West Bank because he cannot get a majority in his cabinet for this," Mr. Shikaki said.

Mr. Shikaki noted that even before his latest problems, Mr. Netanyahu was barely able to garner a cabinet majority in early March for handing an additional two per cent of the West Bank to self-rule, less than a third of what the Palestinians wanted at this stage of the peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu appeared to confirm Palestinian fears in an interview published Monday in which he reaffirmed his hardline stand and insisted Palestinians scale back their hopes for self-determination.

"There won't be a change in my policy, and the Palestinian demand that we stop (settlement) construction will simply delay any possibility of any resolution of this crisis," he said.

Rejecting outright Palestinian hopes of making historically Arab East Jerusalem the capital of a future state, Mr. Netanyahu said peace negotiations and further extensions of Palestinian self-rule could only occur once Palestinians bring their expectations "to realistic proportions."

"They are still talking of getting most or all of the West Bank, that means the gap between the two sides is too large," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"We are against a Palestinian state because we think it could pose a mortal threat to the survival of Israel. And we're certainly not going to divide Jerusalem," he said.

Such intransigence coincided with a new opinion poll showing that Palestinian support for the peace process dropped from 73 per cent to 60 per cent over the past month, hitting its lowest point since a Jewish settler massacred 29 worshippers in a West Bank mosque in February 1994.

Opposition demands review of decision

TEL AVIV (AP) — Opposition lawmakers asked the supreme court on Monday to overturn a decision not to prosecute Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and two senior government officials for fraud and breach of trust.

"There are too many signs that our prime minister was a partner to a plot," said Yossi Sarid, leader of the left-wing Meretz Party, after submitting the appeal. "We can't accept the idea that the Israeli state is being governed by a gang."

The allegations stem from an influence peddling scandal surrounding the short-lived appointment of Mr. Netanyahu's crony as attorney general. Mr. Netanyahu's role "raised bewildering questions," but there was not enough evidence to indict him, prosecutors said Sunday in wrapping up a three month probe.

The affair has damaged Mr. Netanyahu's reputation and credibility and he still faces a political crisis that reduces the likelihood of progress in the limping peace process with the Palestinians.

However, there were signs Monday that the six-party coalition will hold for now. Two cabinet members of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party who had reportedly been wavering whether to resign over the affair said Monday they would remain in the government.

Two centrist parties, the Third Way and Israel Be'alya, also signalled they would not holt the coalition which controls 66 seats in the 120-member parliament.

A survey published Monday suggested that 58 per cent of Israelis felt Mr. Netanyahu did not need to resign over the affair, while 40 per cent said he should step down. 57 per cent said there was no need for new elections, as demanded by the opposition.

The survey among 502 respondents had an error margin of 4 per cent. It was conducted by the Dahaf Institute and published in the Yediot Ahronot daily.

Chirac announces early elections; European unity will dominate poll

PARIS (AFP) — French President Jacques Chirac on Monday announced the dissolution of the national assembly and early legislative elections in two rounds on May 25 and June 1.

Announcing the risky gamble on television, Mr. Chirac appealed to voters to give him a majority in parliament "which will have the strength and the necessary duration to meet the challenges of today."

He cited European Monetary Union (EMU), reforms of EU institutions and of NATO as the challenges.

"Above all, what I hold most dear, is a European Union in the service of man. A living social model. A common front against the scourges which threaten our societies: unemployment and of course exclusion, but also exploitation of children, drugs, dirty money, terrorism."

The president appealed for voters' support to "build a Europe respectful of the genius of the nations which compose it and capable of rivaling the great world groups."

Mr. Chirac, who said the dissolution decree would be published Tuesday, added that it was time "to go further on the road of change."

He said it was in the national interest to hold early elections, and appealed to voters to give a clear verdict by electing a new majority for a new five-year term.

Referring, without naming it, to the extreme-right national front, Mr. Chirac warned against "appeals for hatred" and the "designations of scapegoats," calling on voters to reaffirm their "values" and their "civil and moral benchmarks."

The president also rejected "laissez-faire" capitalism and at the same time



French President Jacques Chirac announces he is dissolving the National Assembly and calling for early parliamentary elections in this taped prime-time address to the nation, on Monday, in this image taken off French TFI television (Reuters photo)

increased state intervention, spending and taxes.

Mr. Chirac made his move even though his conservative coalition holds four fifths of the 577 seats in the national assembly and as opinion polls suggested that there was a risk his Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) and its centre-right ally, the Union for French Democracy (UDF) could lose control of parliament.

The result will be close, a poll by the Louis Harris Institute said Monday, adding the Conservative coalition will come 2.5 points ahead of the combined forces of the left in the snap election.

Another poll Monday by the Sofres Institute said the Conservatives would lose 150 seats but still have a majority of 40. Speculation that the elections would be brought forward from their

original date of March next year has had French political circles in a frenzy for the past two weeks.

Analysts pointed out that Mr. Chirac has more chance of victory now than next year, when he is likely to have introduced even more austerity measures.

Opposition Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin said the right and Prime Minister Alain Juppe in particular wanted the French to go to the polls before confirmation "of three events: the aggravated failure of the government's economic policies, its intention to have recourse to a cure of increased austerity and the development of the scandals" threatening it. Mr. Chirac's main reason for an early dissolution is to clear the decks ahead of the deadline for EMU next spring.

But Mr. Chirac, who has

plumbed depths of unpopularity since taking power in May 1995, is also keen to "relaunch" his ailing government, to give him parliamentary support through the end of his seven-year mandate in 2002.

The election campaign is expected to be dominated by arguments over the economy and Europe. Mr. Jospin said Sunday night that, if elected, he would not take France into a single European currency if it required a further bout of economic austerity measures.

"I say 'no' to absolute respect for the three per cent criterion," he said in a TV interview, referring to the Maastricht requirement for public deficits to be under three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) for single currency applicants. "If we were in office, we would not do it."

Akaileh urges opposition to start Islamic-leftist coalition

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite the opposition of his own party and the scepticism of some leftist leaders, Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Abdullah Akaileh said he intends to push for the formation of an Islamist-leftist coalition ahead of this autumn's general elections.

"I believe that there is much common ground for a political alliance between the IAF and the leftists and I intend to insist on my proposal," Dr. Akaileh told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview on Monday.

Dr. Akaileh's proposal would be aimed at creating an opposition bloc to counteract the merger of eight centrist parties, which recently announced their intention to field candidates under the unified ticket of the National Constitutional Party, he said.

Dr. Akaileh, a "dove" who led the moderate wing of the IAF in its call for entering in a coalition with the previous government of Prime Minister

Abdul Karim Kahariti last January, said he first forwarded his proposal to the IAF Executive Committee and other bodies of the front three months ago.

The project, which is Dr. Akaileh's alone and has received no backing from other moderate Islamists so far, has not yet been discussed by the IAF higher cadres.

Though Dr. Akaileh stated that "there are not so many people (in the IAF) opposing it," a source from the social-democratic Jordanian Unionist Democratic Party (JUDP) who asked not to be identified, described the possibility of the IAF fielding candidates in the next general elections in a coalition with the leftists as "unreal."

"The IAF would lose many of its voters if it entered a political alliance with the leftists," the source said, "and all its leaders know it very well."

The source added that "the front is also too strong and powerful to need to run with anybody else."

In the 1993 general elec-

tions, 17 of 23 candidates on the IAF ticket made it to the Lower House of Parliament.

"Dr. Akaileh's proposal is not shared by the IAF, and all our contacts and negotiations have failed," said Deputy secretary general of the leftist Al Haq Party, Najj Alloush.

Mr. Alloush said Dr. Akaileh approached Al Haq of his own initiative, but contacts were interrupted when the IAF deputy travelled abroad, a few weeks ago, and his party fellows would not continue the negotiations.

"The formation of a wide opposition front appeared impossible, exactly as it happened when a similar attempt was made ahead of the 1993 general elections," Mr. Alloush noted.

Before the 1993 parliamentary elections, a group of moderate Islamists presented a proposal for the creation of a unified opposition bloc with the leftists, but IAF leaders rejected it.

According to Mr. Alloush, "the main obstacle on the way to a leftist-

Islamic coalition is that the IAF wants to run [in the electoral campaign] alone."

Though it is yet unclear how many and which leftist parties Dr. Akaileh has so far approached directly, when first publicised, his proposal gained the praise of the secretary general of the Communist Party Yacoub Zayaddin.

In early April, Arabic press reports quoted Dr. Zayaddin as saying that "Dr. Akaileh's proposal was most welcome, though it is not shared by the IAF ranks."

Secretary General of the Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party Khalil Haddadin denied his party has been approached by Dr. Akaileh, though it recently merged with Al Haq, headed by Mohammed Zobi, and the Arab Land Party, headed by Mohammad Ouran, into the Jordanian Nationalist Democratic Front.

"However, I expect Dr. Akaileh to contact us soon," Mr. Haddadin told the Jordan Times.

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq announced Monday it will violate the West's "no-fly" zone over the south of the country, in a new challenge to the United States, to ferry Muslim pilgrims by helicopter from the Saudi border.

An Iraqi official "warned the United States against intercepting our Iraqi aircraft because any U.S. action which endangers the security of our aircraft and our pilgrims will provoke an appropriate response."

The official said the aircraft would be sent to the Saudi border from Monday and that foreign journalists in Baghdad would be invited to board the helicopters on Tuesday.

The annual pilgrimage to Islam's holiest city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia ended Saturday, and the faithful have already begun leaving the city where the Prophet Mohammad was born.

The Iraqi decision was made after a joint meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council and the ruling Baath Party, chaired by President Saddam Hussein, the official said. "The decision was made to send the helicopters because it wasn't possible to coordinate the pilgrims' return by airplane, as the authorities had no contact with them while they were in Mecca," he said.

"Sick and weary" pilgrims will be transported from the

Saudi border near Ar'ar. The helicopters will wait for the pilgrims on Iraqi territory, the official added.

"Iraq stresses that it has the legitimate right to use its civilian aircraft and has already exercised this right by sending an airplane to the holy places," he said.

On April 9, Iraq defied U.N. sanctions and flew more than 100 elderly and sick Iraqi pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Iraq insisted that the flight was "purely humanitarian" and as such not a violation of the air embargo, a position which China, Egypt, France and Russia supported at the U.N. Security Council.

In spite of U.S. demands for condemnation of Iraq for defying U.N. sanctions, the Security Council adopted a formal declaration noting that Iraq had transported 104 pilgrims on an Iraqi Airways plane to Mecca.

The declaration, after a study of the ambiguous terms of U.N. resolutions, said only that it would have been better for Iraq to hold "specific consultations" with the U.N. Sanctions Committee before the flight. Iraq last week thanked the U.N. Security Council.

"The debate on this affair demonstrated the perfect understanding of Security Council members of the illegal position of the United

States," a Foreign Ministry official said.

The Mecca flight was the first violation of U.N. sanctions by an Iraqi plane since the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 670 on Sept. 25, 1990 banning Iraqi aircraft from flying in and out of the country.

The White House warned Iraq Monday that it will take action if Baghdad violates the Western-imposed no-fly zone to bring back the pilgrims.

"We certainly recognise the significance of the Hajj but there are other means and procedures available for the transportation of Hajj pilgrims," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said.

The U.S. Defence Department said, meanwhile, that it may consider a request to exempt the Hajj flights for humanitarian reasons.

"We would encourage the government of Iraq to meet its own obligations under U.N. Security Council resolution and we will monitor carefully any potential violations of the no-fly zone," Mr. McCurry said.

He said the United States would "respond appropriately" to any violations. Mr. McCurry did not elaborate on what that action would be saying only: "We would not shoot down civilian helicopters, obviously."

Meanwhile, U.S. Secre-

tary of Defence William Cohen said that while Washington will not allow Iraq to flout the no-fly zone, it may agree to a request for an exemption.

"The Iraqis are in no position to give any kind of dictates to the American people, or NATO or the United Nations," Mr. Cohen told reporters before a meeting with the Czech defence minister.

"Obviously when there are humanitarian issues involved that we would be most receptive, the United Nations would be receptive," he said.

The U.N. Security Council was "getting details" Monday about Baghdad announcement. Asked about Iraq's warning, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson told reporters here: "We are getting all the details, we don't have all the details yet."

A Western diplomat said that as of Friday, Iraq had not sought the permission of the U.N. Sanctions Committee for the helicopter flights across southern Iraq from the Saudi border. However, the "no fly" zone was not set up by the U.N. Security Council.

After Iraqi forces were driven from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war, Britain, France and the United States set up protection zones over northern Kurdish and southern Shiite areas in Iraq where they have forbidden the Iraqis to fly.

'Iraqi people start to feel little change brought about by oil-for-food deal'

By Lotte Jorgensen
Special to the Jordan Times

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi people are feeling a small and gradual change that is nevertheless substantial and secure with the advent of the era of the oil-for-food deal.

In this way newly appointed United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, explains the expected end-result of the oil-for-food deal struck with the United Nations. Food has been entering Iraq since the middle of March and the distribution is slowly beginning now. But Mr. De Mistura stresses the message of downsizing the expectations as to the effects of the U.N.-Iraqi oil-for-food deal.

"This is not going to suddenly be a miracle change in life for Iraq. What we are talking about here, is a change in calorie intake, from 1,300 to 2,100 calories a day per person. Furthermore we will secure the food supplies, at least within the period of the operation," says Mr. De Mistura. For the past two months U.N. observers from all over the world have travelled through Jordan, passing by the UNDP office in Amman, which has operated

as liaison office for the oil-for-food operation, organising the transport the last bit of the way to Baghdad: 950 kilometres by car. Expectations among the Iraqi people have been growing along with the increasing number of U.N. staff arriving at Baghdad, nourished at the same time by a continuous flow of rumours about the food supplies.

A modest food feast

A total of about 300,000 tonnes of food is expected to arrive as a result of the oil sales and that is a considerable increase compared to the 10,000 tonnes which have been arriving every month up until now.

But even so, there is not going to be a food feast in Iraq, warns Mr. De Mistura, who has a long experience in humanitarian operations around the world, including two missions to Iraq during the Gulf crisis. The food is to be distributed through the already well established ration system, and this means that a slow increase in the amounts of food rations will become reality, as opposed to what many thought would be a sudden boom of loads of food to be distributed.

Realising this could cause a feeling of disappointment among the Iraqi people, and to avoid this, Mr. De Mistura feels, there is a need for a campaign by the Iraqi government to explain the situation to people. Once the food is there. However disappointment was already apparent when, last week an increase in the rations amounted to only 2 kilograms more than the previous rations of seven kilograms per person.

How much is enough?

The U.N. food monitors have been called to Baghdad to ensure that the food is being distributed equitably, but Mr. De Mistura admits that it is not yet possible to determine whether food distribution according to rules laid down by the U.N. Security Council is adequate.

"This will be a little bit learnt on the spot. But why not start by, first of all, making sure, that the distribution system reaches the greater majority of the people, and that they are actually receiving what is coming," says Mr. De Mistura.

You may raise the question, whether those people in the distribution system are the really needy people, which I cannot answer

now. But we are looking at many shipments coming in, so we do have the time to catch up and make adjustments if necessary," he continues.

As regards to the adequacy of food, the immediate answer may already be known as a crystal clear "No! it's not enough."

"There will be an improvement, nothing more at this stage, we go step by step here," says Mr. De Mistura.

The same strategy seems to apply to the question, whether the oil-for-food operation will be the first step towards easing the sanctions on Iraq. As far as Mr. De Mistura is concerned, the oil-for-food deal is a purely humanitarian operation. But he is very optimistic regarding an extension of the operation:

"If the Iraqi government, the U.N., the international community and all of us here in Baghdad, prove that the operation is viable and working, that should be a very strong argument for saying at least, let us continue the operation. Also, because there has been some delays, so when you catch up late, there is an argument for catching up further. But really, anything can happen," he concludes.

Released Hamas leader opposes reconciling with Arafat

GAZA (AFP) — A founding leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) who was released over the weekend after more than three years in an Israeli jail declared his opposition Monday to any reconciliation with Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority.

"There is no common ground between Hamas and the Palestinian authority," said Abdul Aziz Rantissi in an interview from home in the Khan Younis refugee camp in the southern Gaza strip.

Mr. Rantissi said he opposed a decision by some Hamas leaders to attend a national reconciliation conference between all main Palestinian factions organised by Mr. Arafat in February.

"I would only agree to such a national dialogue if its aim was to prevent bloodshed between Palestinians," Mr. Rantissi told AFP.

But he said his movement must remain opposed to the partial self-rule peace agreements signed by Mr. Arafat with Israel.

"Islam prohibits recognition of Israel, Palestine



Abdul Aziz Al Rantissi, the spokesman for Hamas deportees in Lebanon in 1992 and one of the top leaders of Hamas in Gaza, talks on the phone to a friend who called to congratulate him on Monday. Rantes was released Sunday night from an Israeli jail after three and half years (Reuters photo)

must be returned to the Palestinians," said Mr. Rantissi at 50. The Islamic militant

returned home to Gaza on Sunday after being released from an Israeli prison. He had been

detained by Israel for 42 months without trial for belonging to a "hostile organisation."

Composer, singer Sayed Mekkawi dies

CAIRO (AP) — Blind composer and singer Sayed Mekkawi, whose television operetta "The Big Night" has been sung by millions of Egyptians and Arabs since the 1960s, has died at 69. Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported Monday.

The agency did not say when Mekkawi died and his family could not immediately be reached. His funeral was due later Monday.

Mekkawi was in Lebanon last month to sing in a concert, but was admitted to hospital with severe pneumonia. He was later flown back to Egypt to continue his treatment.

Mekkawi, who was blind since childhood and was never seen in public without his trademark black glasses, enjoyed a large following in the Arab World, where he sang in numerous concerts in his gruff but pleasant voice as he strummed the lute.

His standing as one of the most gifted Arab music composers this century was confirmed when Egypt's late singing diva Umm Kalthoum sang "Oh, you who made me lose sleep" in the 1960s for which he wrote the



music. Mekkawi, however, will always be remembered by his most popular work, the operetta "The Big Night," which portrays simple Egyptians celebrating a religious feast.

More than 30 years after its first screening by Egyptian television, the operetta remains a favourite with TV viewers and its sound track has sold millions of copies.

Another famous work sung by Mekkawi is his patriotic rendition "The Earth talks in Arabic."

Mekkawi is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Only 16 Indians dead after Hajj fire — Indian diplomat

MECCA (AFP) — Sixteen Indians are dead and 179 missing from the fire that swept through the camps of Muslim pilgrims last week near the holy city of Mecca, an Indian diplomat said Monday.

At least 343 pilgrims died and 1,537 were injured in the massive blaze Tuesday in a camp in Mina, just south of Mecca, according to an official Saudi toll as authorities struggled to identify the nationalities of victims.

"So far, 179 Indians are missing and 16 others have been identified among those who died," said George Joseph, a senior official at the Indian embassy in Riyadh.

He added that 123 have been counted as injured in the Mecca hospitals.

"They will have the priority on the return flights," he said.

The counting process began Sunday as pilgrims headed home after the week-long Hajj, to Islam's holiest sites, with officials checking their names against lists of those who arrived in Saudi Arabia.

Return flights to India were set to begin Monday but pilgrims had to check in at Jeddah's airport, south of Mecca, 24 hours before their flight.

"We have decided to count the pilgrims at the bus terminal in Mecca. It is easier than in Jeddah, where they could disperse," Mr. Joseph said.

Indian officials said they feared that more than 600 pilgrims had lost their lives in the inferno.

Most of the victims of the fire, started by a gas canister used for cooking, are believed to have come from India and Pakistan. The fire incinerated 70,000 tents.

Israelis observe Passover despite political scandal

TEL AVIV (AP) — Setting aside politics for a few hours, observant Israelis scrubbed their homes, waited in long supermarket lines and burned bread crumbs Monday ahead of the Passover holiday that celebrates the Israelites' delivery from slavery in Egypt.

Holiday preparations were overshadowed by an influence-peddling scandal in Benjamin Netanyahu's government, with prosecutors saying the prime minister's behaviour in the appointment of a crook as attorney general raised "bewildering questions," but that they lacked evidence to indict him.

Mr. Netanyahu decided to avoid the sting of further controversy and cancelled plans to celebrate Monday evening's festive Passover meal, or Seder, at an air force base. Soldiers had complained the visit would have kept them from going home for the holiday.

Observant Jews thoroughly clean their houses before Passover to make sure no traces of "hametz," or yeast products, remain.

In Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim (Hundred Bells) district, bonfires burned on the sidewalks as Jews in traditional black coats and hats threw bread, telephone books and anything else that might contain yeast into the flames.

During the eight-day holiday, Jews traditionally abstain from yeast products, including bread and beer, to commemorate the hasty departure of the Israelites who had no time to let their bread rise before the trip out of Egypt.

Politicians frequently referred to the ancient story Monday in dealing with Israel's modern-day political scandal. Yossi Sarid, head of the opposition Meretz Party, referred to the prime minister and government as "hametz"

and demanded he be indicted.

Trade Minister Nathan Sharansky, whose party, Israel Ben Aliya, decided to remain in Mr. Netanyahu's coalition.

said: "We have all come out of Egypt and now we need to see how we can get over this to return to governing."

Other Israelis also took the long view.

Eva Zadok, an English teacher from the northern town of Nazareth Illit, said that although the scandal had serious ramifications, it did not keep her from cleaning out her cupboards and washing the floors.

"We have prepared for Passover in the midst of wars. One is a continuation of tradition, the other is, in perspective, a minor political hiccup," said Ms. Zadok.

The major supermarket chains reported record sales and shoppers waited in long lines despite extra

workers hired to pack bags and work as cashiers. Ruth Shaked, advertising manager of the Supersol chain, said shoppers were rewarded with gifts for large purchases.

"Lotions, wines, and even China sets were given away to encourage shoppers," said Ms. Shaked.

"But among our religious clients our biggest seller was aluminum foil to cover their Kosherised counter tops."

In Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market, Rafai Dudush, a mother of six, said she had been shopping for two days. "I have spent 1,000 shekels (\$300) on food... I am tired, I shop and clean and shop and clean," said Ms. Dadush.

The army, meanwhile, reimposed a full closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the duration of the holiday, barring all Palestinians living there from entering Israel.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Budgie-The Little Helicopter
14:30 Grimmy
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Super Sports Follies
16:30 Day House
17:00 Preserving for the Taste of it
17:15 The Album Show
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — The Office
20:00 Tili
20:30 Encounter
21:10 The Nature of Things
22:00 News in English
22:25 Snowy River
23:00 Mission Impossible

PRAYER TIMES

04:32 Fajr
05:55 (Sunrise) Duha
12:34 Dhur
16:12 'Asr
19:13 Maghreb
20:36 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweithieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel.
661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.

622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Khamisni weather conditions will prevail during the next three days. It will be hot, dry, and dusty during the day and warm at night with winds southeasterly to easterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm and dusty, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman15/31
Aqaba20/36
Deserts14/34

Jordan Valley18/36
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 28, Aqaba 34 Humidity
readings: Amman 25 per
cent, Aqaba 17 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Wissam Hazyin748563
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharab820425
Dr. Munther Al Qraini779959
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem620115
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Naijrouk pharmacy623672
Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir276852
Al Quds pharmacy(---)

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Al Safarini987565
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Dept661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 621111.

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussien Medical Centre
813813/32
Khalidi Maternity644281/6
Aklieh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muasher 77101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital
602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart
and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital
(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital
(02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:15Sanaa (RJ)

10:25 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:55 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)
11:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
12:00 Manchester (add) (RJ)
17:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
18:30 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:10 Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:50 Sharm Al Sheikh (add) (RJ)
23:25 Frankfurt (RJ)
23:59 Paris (add) (RJ)
00:10 Brussels (add) (RJ)
00:45 Paris (add) (RJ)
06:10 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:40 Munich (YP)
18:05 Kiev (LU)
19:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
21:10 Cairo (MS)
21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:50 Aden (IY)
23:35 Lamaca (CY)
01:25 Jakarta (GA)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:20 Beirut (RJ)
09:00 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 Vienna, Brussels (RJ)

Other Flights

08:55 Damascus, London (KJ)
04:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:30 Munich (YP)
19:05 Kiev (LU)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
22:30 Cairo (MS)
23:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
01:55 Aden (IY)
02:25 Bucharest (RO)
02:25 London (GA)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Athens (OA)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:00 Aqaba (RW)
17:15 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (RW)

HILJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday

Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday

Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday

Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana600/600
Banana (imported)950/700
Cabbage130/70
Carrot200/150
Cauliflower180/100
Cucumber (large)250/130
Cucumber (small)400/220
Eggplant200/120
Fava beans350/200
Garlic (Green)350/250
Grape fruit230/160
Lemon670/400
Marrow (large)250/120
Marrow (small)400/250
Onion (green)230/130
Onion (dry)400/200
Orange500/350
Peas550/350
Pepper (hot)570/400
Pepper (sweet)650/400
Potato430/280
Spinach240/150
String beans750/450
Tomato310/140

Women's association to showcase Pakistani art

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the patronage of HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan, the Pakistan Women's Association (PWA) is scheduled to hold an arts exhibition on April 28 and 29, to raise funds for the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA).

The exhibition, to be held at the Amman Marriott Hotel, will display distinctive art including jewellery, textiles, handicrafts and evening wear — all of Pakistani origin.

The PWA has been organising an annual exhibition with a different emphasis each year.

Last year, the theme was high-quality furniture, this year it will be jewellery with Middle Eastern character, due to great public demand, Fawzia Kurdi a member of the association said.

Renowned Pakistani jewellers Shamim Rahem and Abdullah are participating with their work displayed in the exhibition.

Other well-known participating Pakistani artists are Sbahida Khan, a textile designer who will display her work once more this year after demand for her work followed her exhibition of 1986 in Al Hussein Sport City.

Ms. Khan will display bed covers, pillows, silk-screens and tapestries, all utilising fine Pakistani fabrics.

Evening wear designed by Pakistani designer of French origin, Florence, will also be showcased.

While designing her line, Florence kept cognizant of Jordanian trends, keeping her clothes western or semi-western, Dodi Tabbaa, member of the association explained.

Ms. Tabbaa, is participating in the exhibition as an artist as well, with a wearable art series of 100 per cent Pakistani cotton T-shirts with laser printed coloured crayon designs.

The All Pakistani Women's Association (APWA) enhances village arts and crafts of which we are showcasing furniture and ethnic works, Ms. Kurdi explained.



Under the patronage of HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan, the Pakistan Women's Association (PWA) is to hold an arts exhibition on April 28 and 29, to raise funds for the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA). The above illustration typifies some of the art, jewellery and textiles to be displayed.

This comes as a combined effort to help the needy in Pakistan and Jordan, she added.

The Special Education Centre for the Disabled will also be participating in the exhibition to display their annual accomplishments.

This annual April exhibition of high-quality materials is the result of

over a year's work, aiming to raise funds to help the poor and disabled children in Jordan. Ms. Kurdi affirmed.

The YMWA is a non-profit voluntary organisation, founded in 1972 and chaired by HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan which aims to help the disabled and needy.

Prime minister addresses issue of civil servant accountability

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday maintained that his government is determined to hold accountable any civil servants who prove to have neglected their duty and impeded progress.

During a visit to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation where he met with Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin and senior staff, Dr. Majali stated that some parts of the public administration system are affected by weak employee performances, calling for prompt action.

"The government will display its appreciation for competent workers while others who are not fit to fulfil their duty should leave their positions either voluntarily or by force as we are passing through a stage which does not tolerate incompetent or unfit workers," he declared.

"We are living in an age which tolerates neither delay nor time wasting and we face a world which shows no mercy for incompetent people," he added, calling on civil servants to labour in a serious and responsible manner following the directives of His Majesty King Hussein who, he said, exemplifies a mentor for others to follow through his endeavours and relentless efforts designed to make Jordan a model to be emulated.

In his letter of designation to the prime minister on March 19, King Hussein directed the new govern-



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday visits the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to discuss issues pertaining to public sector accountability, inefficiency and remedies pertaining to such with Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin and senior staff (Petra photo)

ment to rid public institutions of inefficiency, sluggishness and stagnation so as to develop and modernise the public administration system.

"We must base our plan on objectivity and must search for qualified, energetic, loyal and honourable citizens and appoint them in the proper places enabling them to use their potential in the service of the homeland," the King had said in his letter.

"We are not trying to limit people's livelihood nor harm anyone but we seek to get rid of all elements which might impede our progress," according to

King Hussein.

Emphasising that the government encourages decentralisation, the prime minister urged ministry engineers to personally inspect all areas that require attention and offer better services to the public.

Noting that the government is in the process of creating a special institution for the rehabilitation and training of the Jordanian workforce, the prime minister admonished civil servants to learn from their mistakes and set a good example in dealing with the public.

Dr. Haddadin told the

prime minister that the Ministry of Water and Irrigation holds a serious responsibility and that ministry staff has now realised the requirements of the present and future stage.

He maintained that the ministry will soon finalise a plan of action to help in overcoming impediments to professional performances.

Dr. Majali answered questions from ministry senior officials concerning their work and stressed that the government supports the performance and plans of competent and responsible workers.

14 die in incidents over holiday weekend

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A total of 14 people, including six children, died in accidents over the holiday weekend, according to police and Civil Defence Department (CDD) reports.

Six people, including three children, were fatally hit by cars during the holiday, reports said.

In the Rewashed area, a five-month old child was killed after being run over by a tank truck, driven by a 27-year old man, official reports said.

The report stated that the child, Ferial Ramadan, was behind the tank truck which backed up, ignorant of the child's presence.

Traffic officials maintained that the driver of the tank truck, identified as R.M., did not bear a drivers licence and was at fault for inattention while driving.

In Zarqa, an eight-year old girl, identified as Areen Ibrahim, was killed after a bus hit her.

In Amman, a five-year old child, identified as Mohammad Walid, died after being struck by a vehicle in Jabal Hussein, the reports said.

The three other people killed in similar incidents in Balqa, Aqaba and Amman were identified as Mohammad Sayah Mohammad, 46, Yassin Obaid, 23, and Jassem Mohammad.

In other road accidents reported in the Kingdom, four people, including one child, were killed.

Reports identified the deceased as Jihad Abdul Ruhman,

24, killed in Balqa; Abber Hamed Mitek, 13, killed in Karak; Khalid S., 60, killed in the Badia area; and Mohammad H., 25, who was killed in a car collision in the Shmeisani neighbourhood of Amman.

In other incidents, a 26-year old man was killed through an accidental electrocution in Aqaba, the reports said.

According to the reports, the victim, identified only as H.A., was holding a ladder attached to a crane, and when the crane lifted the ladder, it struck electric wires causing electric waves to be conducted through the ladder, killing the victim.

In Irbid, the CDD reported that an 10-year-old child drowned in the King Abdullah Canal.

The deceased, identified as Jalal Subhi, fell in the canal while on a picnic with his family, the report said.

In Zarqa, a 16-month old child, who was eating a sandwich, choked to death, police reports said.

According to the reports, Anas M. was eating falafel and bread when a bite stuck in his throat and he choked. "Anas' mother tried to rescue him by hitting his back but was unable to save him," the report said.

In the Rashid suburb of Amman, an 11-year old child was killed when a tyre hit her head, the reports said.

The victim, Sabrin Udwan, was sitting in her back-yard when the incident occurred, the report said.

A 23-year old man was changing one of his vehicle's tyres, and had it parked on a hill, according to the report. "One of the tyres rolled down the street and struck the child, killing her instantly," the report said.

'Premier discusses reduction of oil prices with Iraq'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali is reported to have told Parliament before the 'Eid Al Adha holiday that Jordan has asked Iraq to reduce the price of oil sold to the Kingdom and received an encouraging response.

Dr. Majali was quoted by the Arabic weekly Shihani as informing deputies at a meeting on April 14, that he discussed the possible oil price reduction with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz shortly after the formation of the new government.

Last January, Iraq agreed to supply Jordan with 32 million barrels of oil worth \$625 million for the fiscal year of 1997.

Of the total, it was stipulated that \$300 million worth of oil would be allotted free of charge and that Jordan would receive \$355

million worth of oil in food and medicine exports and register \$70 million of the oil as partial payment of Iraqi debts to the Kingdom.

Jordan also agreed to increase the price it will pay for Iraqi oil this year to \$19.10 per barrel as compared to last year's agreed-upon sum of \$15.13. The increase in price and quantity would result in a net increase of \$70 million in Jordan's oil bill for this year.

Dr. Majali was also quoted by Shihani as informing the assembled deputies that the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had demonstrated to His Majesty King Hussein in Washington in regards to a remark by Dr. Majali.

Dr. Majali was responding to Ms. Albright's statement that the United States was ready to cooperate with the Iraqi people only upon

the termination of the present regime in Baghdad.

Dr. Majali had described this affirmation as interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

However, according to Shihani, at a meeting in Washington, Dr. Majali told the U.S. secretary of state that he stood by his remarks as both the United Nations and the United States call for non-interference by any country in the internal affairs of another.

Shihani cited informed parliamentary sources for its report and further quoted that the premier as telling deputies that in his dealings with the Israelis he preferred (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu over (former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon) Peres and that Jordan is following the peace process as it has no other alternative.

In reference to the elec-

tions' law, Dr. Majali was quoted as informing the 60 deputies present at the meeting that the government is planning to issue a new law within three months.

This will be submitted to the deputies, according to the premier, but the elections will be based on the one-person, one-vote system as was the case in the 1993 general elections.

Finally, according to Shihani, the prime minister informed the deputies regarding imminent government plans for the rehabilitation of public administration employees in a bid to redress inefficiency.

Dr. Majali outlined plans for the rehabilitation and training of Jordanian workers to replace foreign workers through a special firm to which, he said, both the private and public sectors will contribute.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UNICEF official to arrive in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputy Executive Director for External Relations of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Stephen Lewis is due in Amman today on a three-day visit to Jordan to discuss development-related issues, the condition of Palestinian refugees, the role of women in development and children's needs. Mr. Lewis is expected to meet with Her Majesty Queen Noor, HRH Crown Prince Hassan and hold talks with ministers of planning, foreign affairs and social development.

U.S. ambassador, minister meet

AMMAN (Petra) — U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, Wesley Egan Monday met Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Manser and expressed the U.S. government's readiness to extend financial and other assistance to Jordan to help implement social development programmes. The two also discussed the work of a 29-member group of the Peace Corps. The team will be arriving in Amman shortly to commence two years of work slated to commence in May. They will also be offering voluntary assistance to ministry institutions as well as the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) and the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF). Mr. Manser briefed the ambassador on his ministry's plans to deal with social problems in Jordan, including unemployment, poverty and programmes for disabled persons.

Dec. 7 named Arab Family Day

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Manser Monday announced that December 7 of each year will be observed as Arab Family Day in implementation of a resolution taken by the Arab League Ministers of Social Development Council in 1995. He told the ministry planning committee that he formed a special committee to work out a programme to be executed in observance of the day, grouping representatives of private and public sector institutions. The min-

ister also said that he was dealing with areas of weakness in his administration but would not retire any staff member except upon his or her initiative.

OIC official to hold talks in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Abdul Latif Laraki is Thursday due in Amman in a tour of the Arab region. He is scheduled to hold talks with Jordanian government leaders on issues of concern to the Islamic world, regional developments and the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Students take Tawjihi exam

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 12,696 students in vocational training government schools Monday took the first of a four-day practical examination session of the General Tawjihi Examination for 1997. The students have been trained in industrial, agricultural, commercial, nursing, hotel management and domestic economy fields. The examination was organised at 252 vocational schools around the country.

U.S. official arrives in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — First Deputy Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Defence Fredrick Smith Monday arrived here on a several-day official visit during which he will meet with senior Jordanian officials. Mr. Smith was received at Queen Alia International Airport by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh and other senior military staff.

10,255 visit Petra over holiday

AMMAN (Petra) — Approximately, 10,225 visitors, including 2,740 Jordanians, visited Petra during the 'Eid Al Adha holiday, according to Petra Antiquities Office sources. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, tourism to several sites was heightened during the holiday.

'Measles on the increase in parts of Kingdom'

SALT (J.T.) — Director of the Department of Health in the Balqa governorate, Samir Awamleh reported Monday that 56 cases of measles appeared among children in the Balqa governorate in the first three months of this year.

The measles virus rapidly spreads through touch, urine, and the atmosphere, he explained.

Infected persons often have high temperatures with white spots on the skin surrounded by red circles and a rash on the face and/or body, he added.

In order to control the spread of the disease, Dr.

Awamleh maintained that his department has implemented a wide-scale immunisation programme as well as tallying measles cases as part of a national campaign to fight the disease.

Earlier this month, Dr. Saad Kharabsheh, director of the disease control department at the Ministry of Health, maintained that several governorates in Jordan have recently witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of measles cases among school-aged children.

Affirming that the ministry is carefully monitoring the outbreaks, Dr. Kharab-

sheh stated that the ministry had been expecting the epidemic as outbreaks of the virus have occurred on a regular pattern in 1984, 1988 and 1993.

He was responding to press reports that 550 measles cases have appeared in the Jerash governorate alone this year.

The outbreaks used to occur among children aged from one month to one and a half years, according to Dr. Kharabsheh, but has started to appear among older children.

He stated that mortality rates among infected children have diminished great-

ly and that the Ministry of Health is effecting campaigns against the disease.

Dr. Awamleh maintained that previous to the national immunisation campaign, which started in the mid-1970s, measles used to spread at an epidemic level among children with a resultant high mortality rate among those infected.

He added that the Ministry of Health is striving to eradicate measles and polio by the year 2000 and that children between 18 and 24 months are being given an additional support dose to protect them against measles.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

The Hunchback of Notre Dame at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Easter egg hunt at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra

(Tel. 699141/2), until April 28.

*Works by Lebanese plastic artists at Hamourabi Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until April 24.

*Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman.

Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

*Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

*Paintings by Vian

Shamounki at the Jordan Plastic Art Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 25 (Tel. 623297).

*Paintings by Yassin Al Mohamadani at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303), until April 28.

*Paintings by Patricia Chatelet at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 27.

Italians deploying in Albanian rebel port get warm welcome

VLORE, Albania (AFP) — Italian forces deploying in this rebel-held town for the first time received a loud and warm welcome Monday as they disembarked from troop carriers and moved to secure the harbour.

Hundreds of Albanians gathered in the main square of the battered port before walking to the Quayside to greet the Italians. As they moved en masse towards the Italian ships in the harbour they chanted the name of their town in unison, "Vlore! Vlore!"

The Italians are the first units of the multi-national force which began arriving in Albania a week ago to set up camp in a rebel-held part of the country. All other deployments have been in the north or the capital, Tirana.

Several hundred Italian troops and dozens of armoured personnel carriers began unloading early Monday morning. Earlier, two Italian naval vessels, an amphibious craft, the San Giusto, and the Vittorio Veneto, arrived off-shore around dawn and sat outside the port.

The soldiers took up

defensive positions around the harbour to secure the area while the other troops disembarked. A few curious locals gathered to watch the initial activity. Other Italian troops arrived by land from the nearest government-held town, Fier, some 30 kilometres to the north. They will be joined later Monday by some 130 Greek troops.

Italy leads the 6,000-strong force, just over half of which has already been deployed in the country. The total force for Vlore will number some 700 soldiers.

"There have been no hostilities. One could say that they have welcomed us calmly," the Italian news agency, ANSA, quoted an officer with the troops as stating. The agency also quoted a local Albanian leader, Medin Xhelilil, head of the Vlore district council who was the first to come to port. He told the Italian agency that a large rally would be organised "because we want to welcome our Greek and Italian friends who have come to help Vlore."

Soon after his arrival, the Italian commander of the force in Vlore, General Girolamo Gilio, met with

local leaders, port officials and Vlore police chief, Milto Kordha.

Mr. Kordha told AFP afterwards that he had promised that "the local authority and police are ready to collaborate with the multinational force." Earlier in April there was some concern over sending Italian troops into the port because of a wave of anti-Italian feeling here following the sinking of an Albanian refugee ship off Italy in late March.

More than 80 people died, many of them from Vlore, when their overloaded vessel collided with an Italian naval ship trying to stop it reaching Italian shores. Italy had wanted to put a stop to the flow of refugees from Albania. Since the unrest began, more than 13,000 Albanians have sought refuge in Italy.

Vlore kicked out government officials in March during violent street protests that escalated into an armed insurrection which rapidly spread across southern Albania.

Groups raided weapons depots as the Albanian army melted away and police hid in their homes. So-called

salvation committees have come to power since in several towns but they have been no match for the groups of well-armed bandits who have terrorised locals.

While food is available in Vlore and other rebel towns, prices are high and security for traders not always guaranteed. One of the main tasks of the multinational force will be to protect aid deliveries to the areas.

However, one Greek defence source in Tirana said he did not expect there to be any trouble with the local population. "They need us," he said. "They don't have control in the port, and they need food and security."

The official Albanian news agency, ATA, reported Monday that 350 Spanish troops disembarked at the northern port of Shengjin, in northern Albania, seven days after a similar sized group landed in the republic last week.

Members of the Italian-led multinational force to safeguard aid deliveries in Albania, the Spanish units will be deployed in several northern locations including nearby Shkoder, 80 kilometres north of Tirana.



British Forces Commander Major-General Bryan Dutton points the way to Chinese Major-General Zhu Barong on his arrival at the Princess of Wales Barracks in Hong Kong Monday. A 40-strong advance contingent of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) arrived to prepare garrison facilities for China's July 1 takeover of the British colony (Reuter photo)

China's army returns to Hong Kong after more than 156 years

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Chinese army returned to Hong Kong Monday after a break of more than 156 years, with the arrival of an advance party of troops ahead of the territory's handover, just 10 weeks away.

A convoy of eight cars and vans brought 40 members of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) from the southern Chinese border city of Shenzhen into Hong Kong at Lok Ma Chau crossing point.

The advance troops are the first unit of the Chinese army to be deployed in Hong Kong since Britain seized the territory in January 1841.

Several other PLA groups are expected to arrive in the last days of British rule, paving the way for a garrison that will be stationed here after the union flag is hoisted down on midnight, June 30.

Beaming and relaxed, the leader of the advance party, Major-General Zhou Borong, stepped from a black saloon (U.S. Sedan) to shake hands with British and Chinese officials and wave to the press.

The vanguard then drove to a high-rise barracks on the waterfront on Hong Kong island, where they were greeted by the commander of the British forces here, Major-General Bryan Dutton.

"This is a historic moment for both British and Chinese Armed Forces. We will be working hard to work together to achieve our common purpose — the smooth transfer of defence responsibility for Hong Kong," Gen. Dutton said in a welcome speech.

"The security environment

we have created has been a major factor in the outstanding success story of modern Hong Kong," he said.

"A good relationship between the PLA advance party and the British garrison is very much in the best long-term interests of the people of this city."

Gen. Zhou, 52, replied with a brief address in Mandarin, although he is a fluent speaker of English and a classmate of Gen. Dutton's at Sandhurst, the British military academy.

He thanked Gen. Dutton for the welcome and echoed his comments that the advance party was an important step to a smooth transition.

"The main point of being here is to prepare the way for the PLA troops to be stationed here from July 1."

"In the remaining 71 days we are here in Hong Kong and we will spend the time with Gen. Dutton and his officers. This will improve mutual understanding and cooperation."

"My colleagues and I will fully utilise this precious time and hope that the British side will give the necessary support," Gen. Zhou told over two hundred waiting reporters.

Gen. Dutton gave a veiled warning about deep-rooted fears among the many Hongkongers who associate the PLA with bloody images of tanks crushing student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

"We intend to give the future garrison every possible assistance as they prepare for their role," he said, before expressing the hope that "their relationship with the local community will be as constructive and rewarding as ours has been."

China, implicitly acknowledging such concerns, has repeatedly promised that its Hong Kong garrison will be drawn from the finest and most disciplined ranks of its armed forces.

Up to 10,000 Chinese soldiers are expected to be based in Hong Kong after the handover, a figure roughly equal to British numbers before 1994.

The British strength is now about 1,800 which will fall to around 1,600 by the end of May, leaving only a few to be withdrawn in the final few weeks before the handover.

Twenty-eight of the advance group will stay at the Prince of Wales Barracks on Hong Kong Island, living alongside the elite Scottish regiment the black Watch.

The remaining 12 will stay at Stonecutters Island, where a new naval base has been built for the PLA.

Their job will chiefly be to coordinate with the British, set up communications and deal with technical problems.

They are dressed in the green uniform of the PLA but, at Britain's request, are unarmed and are having to comply with local police, customs and immigration laws.

A special channel was set up the crossing point to speed their entry into the territory, although the vehicles that brought them in to Hong Kong were fitted with local licence plates.

In an ironic twist, a Royal Navy boat fired a 21-gun salute in Victoria Harbour just an hour before the party arrived. But it was to honour Queen Elizabeth II on her 71st birthday, not the Chinese vanguard.

Taleban: Opposition threat in east is crushed

KABUL (R) — A spokesman for the Taleban Islamic movement Monday said opposition forces responsible for recent attacks in eastern Afghanistan had been defeated.

"The revolts of (Taleban) opponents have all been defeated and the possibility of danger is no longer there," Amir Khan Mutaqi, information and culture minister of the Taleban, told reporters Monday.

Forces loyal to the former government, which was ousted from the capital Kabul by the Taleban last September, have recently launched attacks on eastern provinces held by the Taleban.

The opposition forces said Saturday they repelled a Taleban attack, killing 9 of their fighters, in Kunar province northeast of Kabul.

The Taleban, which controls more than two-thirds of the war-shattered country, faces an alliance of forces commanded by ousted government military commander Ahmad Shah Masood, northern Uzbek chief General Abdul Rashid Dostum and the Shi'ite group Hezb-i-Wahdat.

But Mr. Mutaqi downplayed the strength of the opposition forces and called their recent claims of success propaganda attempts aimed at enhancing the morale of their troops. He said the threat posed by the opposition forces in the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman east of Kabul had been eliminated.

"There is no danger in Kunar either, but occasionally the hideouts of the enemy are firing shells from mountains... They are no longer able to launch any offensive and they issue false news to boost the morale of their fighters," Mr. Mutaqi said.

The Taleban also say they have arrested some 300 opposition prisoners in Nangarhar and Laghman.

The Taleban, a religious student movement born in refugee camps along the border with Pakistan, has imposed strict Islamic law in areas which it controls.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka, which is a seat of Theravada Buddhism, Sunday expressed sadness at plans by Taleban fighters to demolish an ancient Buddha statue in central Afghanistan.

Cultural Minister Lakshman Jayakody said he noted with "the deepest sorrow" the warning issued by the Taleban that they would demolish the famous cliff carving of the Buddha in Bamian province.

"We in Sri Lanka have all major religions functioning side by side in harmony," Mr. Jayakody said. "We have no such acrimony towards any religion or religious monuments."

Other Buddhist leaders in Sri Lanka have called for an international campaign to prevent the Taleban taking over the region and demolishing the statue. The face of the statue was damaged several years earlier.

Frontline Taleban commander Abdul Wahid was reported as saying Wednesday that the spectacular 55 metre high image would be dynamited if the militia managed to break through a rival faction's lines.

He said the carving — set in a huge niche in a sheer cliff face — was un-Islamic as it represented an "infidel" religion. It also bears a human image, which is forbidden by Islam.

The commander also denied the site — which has been the focus of major restoration and archaeological work — was of any scientific or historical value, and appeared determined to destroy it.

"Our religion is a heavenly religion and we have no need of these things here," Com. Wahid said.

N. Korean defector information to be shared — Seoul

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea Monday said information gleaned from a top-ranking North Korean defector will be shared with its allies but that it may be a while before U.S. intelligence could debrief him.

"Our basic position is that we will share the information from Hwang Jang-Yop with our allies," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-Hyong told AFP. But he said it was premature to discuss the possibility of U.S. officers debriefing Mr. Hwang himself, as security officials said they were leeting the 74-year-old defector rest.

He will not be interrogated until "he has considerably adapted himself to the lifestyle here" and had time to rest, said the main government intelligence organisation, the Agency for National Security Planning (NSAP).

The officials were speaking a day after Hwang arrived in the South from the Philippines, ending a 67-day saga which saw him spirited to a secret hideout in the Philippines after seeking

asylum at Seoul's Beijing consulate on Feb. 12.

Seoul, Washington and Tokyo believe he is a walking intelligence gold-mine on the reclusive Communist state, where he was a senior official and from which he became the highest-ranking defector ever to come south.

The NSAP said Hwang and fellow defector Kim Duk-Hong spent their first day in a safe house at an undisclosed location reading newspaper coverage of their arrival.

Hwang walked around the house and discussed what little of Seoul he had been able to see from the window of his limousine on the drive from the airport after his arrival, it said.

But it gave no indication of whether Hwang had also read reports carried by the Kookmin and JoongAng dailies that some 100 of his relatives, friends and associates in the north had been purged as a result of his defection.

The Kookmin daily quoted sources travelling to China from North Korea as saying Hwang's eldest son

had been kicked out of his job and expelled from the capital city of Pyongyang.

"Details (on the questioning of Hwang) have not been decided and it is premature to discuss the issue, but indications are that it may be possible for them (U.S. intelligence officers) at the appropriate time," the Foreign Ministry official said.

He added it was not his place to comment on a statement made by U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen that he had been assured by Seoul of access to Hwang.

Mr. Cohen told NBC television that on his recent trip to South Korea he "was assured the United States also will have access to this defector to find out more about what's in the hearts and minds of the Korean leadership," at the time of Mr. Cohen's visit, Foreign Ministry officials said it might be possible for U.S. officials to debrief the elderly defector after South Korean officials questioned him, saying a joint debriefing would be "inappropriate," Hwang said on arrival

here that the North Korean juche (self reliance) ideology had failed, its people were starving and that he believed the north might resort to war.

Once ranked 13th in the reclusive North's hierarchy, he was close to late North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung, as well as a teacher of his son and heir Kim Jong-Il, and a valued contact-man with China. The 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea operate under a joint U.S.-led command with South Korea's Armed Forces and much of their joint intelligence comes from U.S. satellite surveillance. Meanwhile, an official of the presidential Blue House told reporters here that Hwang's month-long stay in the Philippines before coming to Seoul had been at the request of Beijing.

"The Philippine government had insisted at the time that Hwang could not stay past April 2 but China was against bringing him to Seoul," Yonhap news agency quoted senior presidential secretary Ban Ki-Moon as saying.

Heavy fighting reported on Armenian-Azeri border

MOSCOW (AFP) — Soldiers traded fire across the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the weekend, killing or wounding about 50 people, Azerbaijani military experts told the Interfax News Agency Sunday.

The sources did not give more details on the numbers of dead or wounded, but said casualties were heavier on the Armenian side.

A military official in Baku said Armenian forces had targeted Azerbaijani soldiers overnight Saturday on Azerbaijan's northwestern border near Kazakh and

Tauze, and at the southeastern border of Azerbaijan's disputed ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The source said the Armenian forces had "tried to organise an offensive with tanks, but after the other side retaliated these attacks were stopped."

Neither the Azerbaijani nor the Armenian Defence Ministry, reached by telephone by AFP, confirmed the fighting Sunday, with the Armenian ministry asserting that Sunday had been "quiet and without shooting."

Both sides however acknowledged fighting in the same area on Saturday with many casualties, each side accusing the other of sparking the fighting.

The Azerbaijani ministry said: "Saturday the positions of the Azerbaijani army were targeted by Armenian heavy machine gun, mortar and cannon fire, causing deaths and injuries," but gave no precise casualty figures.

The Armenian ministry said that Armenian forces returned fire after three of their soldiers were injured. On Friday, Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents Le-

von Ter-Petrosian and Gaidar Aliyev discussed the recent increase in cross-border fighting and urged respect for the ceasefire signed in 1994.

The status of Nagorno-Karabakh is at the center of a conflict that left 20,000 dead between 1988 and 1994, and talks on the issue are deadlocked.

An uneasy peace has reigned since 1994 but in mid-March, Armenia fanned the flames of the conflict by naming Nagorno-Karabakh separatist leader Robert Kocharian as his prime minister.

Burma clash kills 23 as rebels hunt for treasure

BANGKOK (R) — A clash between Burmese soldiers and rebels searching for the weapons and hidden treasure of former opium warlord Khun Sa killed 23 people and wounded dozens, Thai and rebel sources said Monday.

The clash took place on April 10 between troops and rebels from the Shan United Revolution Army (SURA), a Thai security source said.

About 500 guerrillas attacked two Burmese army jungle bases near Ho Mong, Khun Sa's former stronghold. Ten Burmese soldiers died in the fighting and about 40 were wounded, the source said.

"(SURA commander) Colonel Yod Suk said three months ago he would come for Khun Sa's hidden weapons and if the Burmese intercepted they would fight," the source said.

Guerrilla sources said SURA has about 5,000 fighters.

The SURA sources confirmed the fighting and said that 13 guerrillas were also killed and 17 wounded in the day-long fighting at a base about 25 kilometres northeast of Ho Mong.

Ho Mong, on the edge of Shan state about 25 kilometres from the Thai border, used to house more than 10,000 civilians and guerrillas during the peak of Khun Sa's power in the 1980s.

Khun Sa, half Shan and half Chinese, once commanded about 20,000 Mong Tai Army (MTA) guerrillas and said he was fighting for the freedom of Shan state. But he was accused of using the MTA as his personal troops to protect his heroin business in the Golden Triangle where Laos, Thailand and Burma meet.

A U.S. court indicted Khun Sa on heroin trafficking charges in December 1989, and Washington has requested his extradition to face charges in the United States.

But Burma's military government has refused the request, saying it will deal with Khun Sa under Burmese law.

Khun Sa surrendered to Burmese troops in January 1996 and Ho Mong has since become a ghost town. He is said to be living a life of luxury in Rangoon and running several businesses in Burma.

The rebel sources said they had heard that Khun Sa hid weapons, jewellery and gold in Ho Mong before he surrendered.

The source would not say how much treasure was believed to be hidden in the jungle, but said Khun Sa had handed over only about one-tenth of the MTA's weapons when he gave himself up.

The MTA disbanded after Khun Sa's surrender.

"Khun Sa does not totally trust Burma so he hid valuables and weapons before his surrender, and reliable sources say most of his money is still in banks in Thailand," the source said.

The Thai security source was not able to confirm the hidden treasure but said many weapons were believed to have been hidden in Ho Mong.

"Our information shows that Khun Sa acquired about 110 SAMs (surface to air missiles), but he handed over only seven when he surrendered, so the rest must be hidden."



Lance Brickley, of the U.S. Coast Guard, eyes the windows and roofs of buildings in downtown Grand Forks, looking for residents who may still need to be evacuated. The town has issued a mandatory 24-hour curfew in flooded areas. Behind him is the shell of the burned-out security building, which was destroyed late Saturday when firefighters could not fight the fire due to the flooding (Reuters photo)

Fire, flood-waters create great plains ghost town

GRAND FORKS, North Dakota (AFP) — Fires which have devastated this great plains city were mostly under control Monday, but flood-waters were still rising and most of the 51,000 residents have fled.

A four-block swathe of buildings still smoldered as 1.8-metre deep, freezing water from the Red River coursed through the city's streets.

Close to its projected crest, the river hovered 7.9 metres above the 8.5-metre flood-stage mark. But the water's precise level was uncertain: The official gauge was under water.

The notoriously flat terrain here has meant that the normally tame Red River is now 16 kilometres across, WCCO radio reported in neighboring Minnesota.

There have been huge livestock losses. Crews have been dispatched to

pick up dead animals to avoid disease, WCCO reported.

Diehard stragglers, who had refused to stop fighting to save mostly-dry homes on streets filled with water, started to obey increasingly strict orders to evacuate North Dakota's once-bustling second-largest city, now 75 per cent empty.

Police officers and firefighters continued their tireless search for trapped residents, traveling the streets by boat to look through buildings as helicopters hovered overhead.

Officials have urged anyone still stranded to spread a white sheet on their roof or hang one from their window to attract the attention of rescuers.

There were still no casualties reported — but normal life in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks in Minnesota was over: No water, no tele-

phones, no power.

Still, Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens sought to strengthen the city's resolve.

"We have no differences at this point," Mr. Owens said during an emotional news conference. "We are all in this together, and we will survive. We will rebuild, and we will be stronger. Grand Forks is a place of excellence."

Eleven buildings sustained heavy damage in the fire, which was only brought under control after planes and helicopters dropped fire-dousing chemicals and water on the burning structures.

Air-crane helicopter pilot Kenneth Chapman said it took more than 60 "drops" with a 7,600-litre "Bambi Bucket" to put out the fires.

"I'm used to fighting wild fires," the Oregon-based pilot said Sunday. "I've never seen anything like this be-

fore. It's pretty ugly down there," where the fire only added to damage from at least one metre of water in the city streets over the past few days.

Grand Forks and East Grand Forks had been battling the Red River for weeks, building dikes and levees, before the river burst through the barriers, flooding both cities and forcing thousands to flee their homes.

The river is expected to crest Tuesday and remain at its peak for five days, WCCO radio reported. It may be weeks before evacuees will be allowed back in their homes.

People who earlier refused to leave their beleaguered homesteads at first were told to boil drinking water and given information about where to go for tetanus shots, but ultimately most were ordered to relief shelters.

U.N. food depot looted, aid train attacked in Zaire

NAIROBI (AFP) — Looters stole supplies from a U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) depot near Kisangani in eastern Zaire early Monday as a train carrying food was attacked further north, the WFP announced here.

Michele Quintaglie, spokeswoman for the WFP, said a Zairean employee of the agency was taken to Kasese refugee camp, 25 kilometres south of Kisangani, at 3:00 a.m. (0100 GMT).

The man was able to flee about three hours later and saw looters at work in a nearby WFP depot before he arrived in Kisangani.

Another WFP storehouse had been pillaged in the rebel-held city Friday.

Ms. Quintaglie could not say how much food was in the Kasese warehouse.

The WFP and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) earlier Monday reported a violent attack on a train carrying 120 tonnes of food aid for Rwandan Hutu refugees, which took place about seven kilometres south of Kisangani.

The attack on the train led relief agencies to suspend

operations to help the Rwandan refugees, aid officials said.

Two Zaireans working for the U.N. WFP fled the train for Kisangani and described the attack as "very violent," Ms. Quintaglie told AFP.

"Our movements towards the camps have been suspended for the time being, until we have details of what happened and security guarantees," the spokeswoman in Kisangani for the UNHCR, Paul Stromberg, said.

He told AFP by telephone that he did not know whether the train had been looted, but Ms. Quintaglie said: "We are supposing it was, at least in part."

No details of who attacked the train were immediately forthcoming. Mr. Stromberg said gunfire had been reported.

Up to 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees live in difficult conditions in makeshift camps south of Kisangani, one of the main cities in eastern Zaire, which has been overrun by mainly Tutsi rebels since October.

The United Nations wants to repatriate them to neighbouring Rwanda, which they fled because of the genocidal civil war of 1994,

which was won by a Tutsi rebel army.

Aid workers returned to refugee camps in eastern Zaire Saturday after a two-day suspension to start preparations to repatriate the refugees, Mr. Stromberg said at the weekend.

Staff of the UNHCR, WFP and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF - Doctors Without Borders) returned to the camps after it was certified that earlier security problems were no longer evident.

"We decided to allow aid workers to go to the camps after we sent two people yesterday to the villages, where local villagers had blocked the route to the refugee camps lying some 40 kilometres away, and found the security situation had improved," Mr. Stromberg said Saturday.

He added that the UNHCR would try to get four medical experts to Kisangani to check on a cholera outbreak in the camps, and a further meeting would be held next week with Rwandan authorities over the repatriation exercise.

Meanwhile, hundreds of recruits have left the rebel-held city of Lubumbashi to join the ranks of Laurent

Kabila's rebels who appeared Monday to be nearing the Zairean capital Kinshasa.

The rebels Monday flew several hundred young men and women to training camps from Lubumbashi, the capital of the southeastern Shaba province, known to local people and guerrillas by its old name, Katanga.

A source close to the mainly Tutsi rebels said that Sunday, local air carriers began taking recruits to the "liberated" towns of Kalema, Kisangani to the north and Goma on the border with Rwanda.

The planes were coming back to Lubumbashi with more rebel troops, their equipment and families.

On Saturday, Mr. Kabila told a public meeting here that his forces, who have captured half the east, impoverished African country, were preparing for the final offensive on Kinshasa.

The rebels are determined to oust President Mobutu Sese Seko, ailing with cancer at 66, who has ruled Zaire for more than three decades, has refused to quit and said he will even stand again in presidential elections are held.

Russia to stress eastern alliance during Jiang visit

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin prepared Monday for a summit with Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin expected to highlight Moscow's stress on an eastern alliance amid a bitter dispute with the western NATO alliance.

Russia, which has been unable to prevent NATO plans to expand into former Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe, has recently played up its links with China, both in geo-strategic terms and their thriving arms trade.

During their Kremlin meeting Wednesday, Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Jiang will build on an accord signed in April last year to create a "strategic partnership for the 21st century" between their two giant nations.

In a veiled challenge to the United States, they are expected to issue a declaration on a "multi-polar" 21st century world, in which Moscow and Beijing would be major players.

The Russian-Sino declaration will "speak out against attempts by anyone trying to play the role of supreme leader in international affairs," Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky told Interfax news agency.

Mr. Jiang, who arrives Tuesday and will leave Saturday, said in Beijing that the summit would promote "a just and rational new order."

Mr. Yeltsin, on holiday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, was working on documents linked to the summit Monday and will fly to Moscow Tuesday. ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

On Thursday the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China will sign an accord on reducing troops along their 7,000-kilometre common border, the scene of Chinese-Soviet clashes in the 1960s.

Missing from the Moscow talks will be Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who was in hospital Friday.

Blended with Moscow's hopes for a strategic partnership with its former Communist rival is a rapidly growing arms trade.

The commercial exchange grew in 1996, reaching about \$7 billion. Military-technical cooperation between the two countries is going well," Mr. Yastrzhembsky said.

Mr. Rybkin's trip overlapped with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's two-day trip to Prague — where he arrived Sunday — for a visit also likely to be dominated by Czech hopes to join an enlarged alliance this year.

Russia is opposed to an expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and Mr. Chernomyrdin said as he prepared to leave Moscow that while Russia "has no right of veto ... it has its position."

NATO is due to hold a

British election campaign again hijacked by IRA bomb alert chaos

LONDON (AFP) — With 10 days to the vote, the British election campaign Monday was again hijacked by a volley of coded IRA bomb alerts that threw the capital into chaos and forced the key candidates to turn their attention to Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister John Major and Labour leader Tony Blair, were, side-tracked from what was to have been a day of issue-oriented speeches and flesh-pressing to condemn the Irish Republican Army, universally presumed to have been behind the string of coded warnings.

Mr. Major expressed his "contempt" for the IRA, and for its Sinn Fein political party, telling his regular morning campaign press conference, "it is essential to take these warnings seriously."

"The IRA have murdered in the past," he said. "They will not hesitate to murder again if they thought it was in their interests to do so. I am extremely grateful to the public for the way in which they have responded this morning."

Mr. Blair, heavily favoured to win the elections and end 18 years of unbro-

ken Tory rule, called the latest wave of IRA bomb alerts "an absolute outrage ... intolerable ... a clear attempt by the IRA to disrupt the British general election ..."

"We will not let them do so, we will not let them distract us from talking about the issues. The British people have never been moved by threats of terrorism and violence and we won't be moved now."

Their differences aside, Mr. Blair and Mr. Major have generally taken a similar stand on Northern Ireland and Mr. Blair has routinely made clear that under a Labour government, Britain policy on Northern Ireland would not change.

Moving on to the thorny issue of Britain's place in the European Union, over which the Tory party has been increasingly divided, Mr. Blair launched into an attack on what he termed Mr. Major's "incompetent" leadership.

In the aftermath of the divisive Euroscepticism bursting out on all sides of the Conservative Party, Mr. Blair charged the premier's failure to bring his troops into line pointed to a party

"literally falling about his ears".

Still hitting back at the Tories for a bitter campaign ad last week portraying him as a Euro-puppet of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Mr. Blair declared, "I know how to negotiate, I know how to lead, John Major can do neither."

Mr. Major later vowed it was campaign business as usual and began a series of school visits to highlight his commitment to improve education, a promise at the heart of the Labour manifesto.

He charged that Blair could never come up with the cash to implement his scheme for cutting class sizes without raising taxes, which Labour says it will not do.

Mr. Blair, speaking in Manchester, insisted that if the Tories win a fifth term on May 1, the ensuing government would be "hopelessly split" and unable to secure the best deal for Britain in Europe.

"They have made a fetish out of isolation and called it strength. As a result, we are no longer respected abroad. We are no longer listened to. Our influence is at an all-time low," Mr. Blair said.

Scientists see signs of universe's 'missing matter'

BALTIMORE (R) — At least some of the universe's missing matter appears to consist of hydrogen and helium gas floating between the galaxies, Johns Hopkins University researchers reported Sunday.

In an article in the April 20 issue of the Astrophysics Journal, the scientists said the thinly spread gas consisted of atoms of the two elements. These atoms had been stripped of their electrons, or "ionized," by intense radiation early in the formation of the universe.

This gas probably accounted for much of the ordinary, or "baryonic," matter that has not been able to be detected in the universe. But it does not include the more exotic types of matter that scientists believe make up a majority of all matter in the universe, the university said in a statement.

More political violence hits Indonesia's Java

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's central Java province was hit by more political violence over the weekend, a week before campaigning officially begins for May parliamentary elections, news reports and residents said Monday.

The Jakarta Post newspaper quoted sources as saying one person was injured in a village in Temanggung Regency, south of the provincial capital Semarang, in a fight Saturday between villagers and supporters of the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP).

In nearby Pekalongan Regency, residents said two people were injured when about 300 PPP supporters attacked the office of the assistant regent Sunday. The reason for the attack was not immediately clear.

However, local government officials said the incidents were minor. Police said the situation was calm and under control.

There have been several clashes in central Java between supporters of the three sanctioned political parties as jockeying intensifies in the country's most populous province in the lead-up to the May 29 poll.

The election campaign begins Sunday. Meanwhile, an Indonesian court has convicted 21 people and acquired five in connection with ethnic and religious rioting last January in the west Java town of Rengasdengklok, the official Antara news agency said Monday.

New Indian premier vows to strengthen reforms

NEW DELHI (R) — India's new Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, a Marxist-turned-social democrat, promised Monday to press ahead with open-market economic reforms and pursue peace talks with old foe Pakistan.

Mr. Gujral, talking to reporters after he was sworn in by President Shankar Dayal Sharma as the country's 12th prime minister since independence in 1947, said he was confident he would be able to persuade former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram to join his cabinet.

Mr. Chidambaram's regional Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) Party decided Saturday not to join the new government after the United Front coalition passed over its party chief, G.K. Moopanar, for prime minister in favour of Mr. Gujral.

"All the economic policies of the previous government will continue and be strengthened," Mr. Gujral said as he had tea with Shar-

ma at the Ormate British-Indian presidential palace.

Asked if his new job would help improve ties with Pakistan, Mr. Gujral, foreign minister in ousted Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's government, said: "All the foreign policy initiatives will continue."

Mr. Gujral said he would keep both Foreign and Finance Ministry portfolios. Politicians said the new prime minister was hoping Mr. Chidambaram, popular among investors and an outspoken proponent of liberal economics, would return soon to his old job.

But officials close to the Goateed, 77-year-old leader said he was likely to continue to keep the foreign affairs job ahead of crucial talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

They are expected to meet on the fringes of a summit of the Seven-Nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) starting in the Maldives capital Male on May 12.

Mr. Gujral helped to initiate a thaw in the troubled relations between India and Pakistan when their foreign secretaries met in March for the first time in three years.

As foreign minister, he later held talks with his Pakistani counterpart, Go-har Ayub Khan, in New Delhi. The foreign secretaries, the highest ranking civil servants in the foreign ministries, are likely to meet again in Islamabad in May.

Mr. Gujral is expected to win a confidence vote set for Tuesday, with the support in the 542-member lower house of his United Front's 178 votes and the Congress Party's 140.

Once that is out of the way, Mr. Gujral's next task will be to pilot Mr. Chidambaram's investor-friendly budget through parliament.

The budget, which would slash taxes and spur private investment, sparked a rally in share prices after it was introduced in February.

The speaker of the lower

Incendiary device damages Sinn Fein offices in N. Ireland

LONDON (R) — Northern Ireland (RUC) — An incendiary device exploded overnight outside the Londonderry offices of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, causing minor damage to the building, police said Monday. No one was hurt in the blast.

The alarm at the premises, situated on Racecourse road in the heart of a Roman Catholic district, went off at 3:00 a.m. (0200 GMT). A window had been smashed and the front door of the building was ablaze when the emergency services arrived, the Royal Ulster

Constabulary (RUC) said. "The cause of the blast is being investigated and the area has been sealed off. No one is hurt, but offices have been damaged," an RUC spokesman said.

There was no one in the building at the time of the blast, Sinn Fein said. The door had been blown off by a home-made device.

The blast came hours before much of London's transport network was thrown into chaos by a string of bomb alerts believed to have been the work of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Sinn Fein, which has been barred from multi-party talks on the future of the province after breaking a ceasefire agreement last year, immediately accused Loyalists of being behind the attack.

"There is little doubt they were responsible. It fits into a pattern," said party official Gerry O'Hara.

The Loyalist paramilitary movements, who are in favour of British rule in Northern Ireland, have not officially renounced their ceasefire, though there have been a string of recent attacks on Republican targets.

Russia's Rybkin in Poland for NATO talks

MOSCOW (AFP) — The head of Russia's Security Council Ivan Rybkin arrived in Poland Monday for a two-day working visit to discuss the enlargement of NATO into Eastern Europe, his press service said, cited by ITAR-TASS agency.

The Polish leadership is expected to discuss the outcome of the Russian summit with the United States and Germany last month with Mr. Rybkin, his spokesman Igor Ignatyev said.

Mr. Rybkin's trip overlapped with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's two-day trip to Prague — where he arrived Sunday — for a visit also likely to be dominated by Czech hopes to join an enlarged alliance this year.

Russia is opposed to an expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and Mr. Chernomyrdin said as he prepared to leave Moscow that while Russia "has no right of veto ... it has its position."

NATO is due to hold a

summit in Madrid in July at which it will invite a number of East European countries to join. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are thought to be the most likely candidates.

During Mr. Rybkin's visit, Warsaw is keen to follow the negotiations between President Boris Yeltsin and his Belorussian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko on the signature of a unification accord between Minsk and Moscow, the agency reported.

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Facsimile: 696183

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Saving Israel not peace

WHILE ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi have been spared indictment by the attorney general for "lack of evidence," it is doubtful that the affair that led to the police corruption probe would end any time soon. By vindicating Netanyahu and his alleged accomplices, the attorney general rejected the findings and recommendations of the police department which had spent three months investigating the so-called Bar-On scandal. In retrospect, the legal adviser Eliakim Rubinstein may have acted to spare the Israeli body politic the turmoil that the indictment of a prime minister might have created. To indict the prime minister and the justice minister would have created "a cloud of suspicion and an unhealthy atmosphere" in Israel, Rubinstein declared.

For starters, the so-called allegations were more than wild accusations since they were submitted by the police department after a thorough investigation including the interrogation of several witnesses. The hundreds of pages that the police filed contained prima facie incriminating evidence that cannot be arbitrarily brushed aside so swiftly. There is a second round of judicious perusal of the affair in the offing when several members of the Knesset petition the supreme court to overrule the attorney general's decision and order a review on the basis of the wealth of corroborating evidence that the police have painstakingly accumulated over a long span of time.

In Netanyahu's own estimation he made a mistake of sorts. But he drew a distinction between a mistake and an illegal act. The issue now revolves around whether the "mistake," that he admits having committed has legal or moral implications of the magnitude that could still lead to indictment. The Israeli supreme court will have to decide on that in due course. There is already one precedent when the court overruled the attorney general on whether to prosecute bank officials suspected of foul play.

Even if the court goes along with Sunday's decision not to prosecute Netanyahu, there remains the political fallout from the affair to reckon with. There is no escape from the conclusion that the prime minister is morally wounded and politically handicapped to govern. In picking on only Ariele Deri, the head of the powerful Shas Religious Party, which claims to represent Sephardic Jews, for further legal action, there is risk that tension would increase among Israelis on religious and racial grounds. Shas Party faithfuls have already sounded the alarm about civil strife erupting in Israel should Deri alone be indicted. With the main opposition party, Labour, now closing the door completely on forming a national unity government, the stage is set for further political turmoil that would overshadow the quest for the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. What is more alarming though is that Netanyahu, in his quest now to keep his coalition intact, will give more concessions to his hardline partners. There is, therefore, every reason to believe that while the attorney general's verdict on Sunday saved Israel an embarrassing episode of political bickering, it did very little to enhance the peace process.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Monday discussed the present state of peace between Israel and Jordan, in light of the 1994 peace treaty, and said that the warm peace is cooling gradually due to Israel's practices and its obstruction of the peace process. Fahed Faneh said it is true that the peace treaty improved Jordan's relations with the Jewish state, but the Kingdom received no financial assistance, like that given to Israel and Egypt, as a reward for their peace accord despite Jordan's meagre resources and its bad need of funds. As to the peace treaty itself, said the writer, it has failed so far to open the Palestinian markets to the Jordanian goods and supply the Kingdom with its requirements of water supplies as stipulated in that treaty. The writer said that Jordan, where 20 per cent of the people live at the poverty line and six per cent live in abject poverty, and where unemployment has reached dangerous proportions, has demanded nothing in exchange for the conclusion of the peace treaty. But he warned that Jordan, whose people are disillusioned by the peace accord, should not be taken for granted by Israel or the U.S., stressing that the Kingdom can by no means be certain to pursue the peace process if its role continues to be marginalised and the needs of its people ignored.

THERE IS no doubt that the scandal which rocked the Israeli society following charges that Benjamin Netanyahu had breached public trust will have its far-reaching consequences on the Israeli society despite the fact that the Israeli premier himself has escaped indictment, said Al Ra'i daily. The paper said the scandal has revealed the extent of corruption which is infesting the Israeli political circles and exposed to the whole world the deviousness characterising the Israeli leaders. The paper said that the charges will not doubt shake the credibility of the prime minister and his Likud Party in the eyes of the Israeli public and will boost the stand of the opposition Labour Party in Israel. Furthermore, it said, the scandal is bound to prompt a number of Israeli cabinet ministers to resign, thus paving the ground for the downfall of the Netanyahu government which will not enjoy the confidence of parliament.

The View from Fourth Circle

The last memorials to atrocity in the Holy Land

By Rami G. Khouri

MUCH OF the complexity of conflict-resolution in the Middle East, especially in the Arab-Israeli sector, is about vanquishing the injustices, atrocities and pains of the past. Earlier this month, a gathering in the town of Birah, in Palestine, provided an opportunity for Arabs and Israelis to grapple with this vexing burden of painful national memory and responsibility, while also raising important questions about the role of forgiveness and reconciliation in conflict resolution.

The Birah gathering of Christians, Muslims and Jews from this region and from other countries took place in the form of a conference to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the massacre at Deir Yassin. This was one component of the Deir Yassin Remembered project that was launched in 1995 by the activism of an American university professor named Dan McGowan. It aims to raise \$100,000 to erect a permanent memorial at the site of the former Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, now located in Israel, west of Jerusalem. Ironically, perhaps appropriately, and certainly controversially for many, the proposed Deir Yassin memorial would stand north of and within sight of Yad Vashem, Israel's powerful Holocaust monument, memorial and museum.

Time has only accentuated the brutality and the brutality of what happened at Deir Yassin. On April 9, 1948, several weeks before the end of the British mandate in Palestine, Jewish commandos from the Irgun and Stern Gang attacked the village of Deir Yassin and killed over 200 people, half of them women and children. Twenty-five Palestinian men were loaded into trucks, paraded through a section of Jerusalem, and then shot in cold blood in a quarry. When the operation was over, a total of 254 Palestinian Arabs at Deir Yassin had been killed, and the rest of the 750 villagers fled to Jerusalem. Within hours, as word of the attack spread throughout Palestine, frightened Palestinians as far away as Haifa fled their homes in fear of meeting a similar fate.

The panic and mass Arab flight sparked by the Jewish attack on Deir Yassin achieved its goals. In the subsequent weeks and months, the integrity of traditional Palestine collapsed. Over 400 Palestinian villages disappeared from the face of the map. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees. The state of Israel came into being. The wholeness and reconstitution of Jewish national life in Israel coincided with the fragmentation and dispersal of the Palestinian community. Deir Yassin, for Arabs,

remains the most profound symbol of this momentous historical phenomenon — the simultaneous birth of Israel, and the fatal wounding of Palestine.

A physical monument to Deir Yassin would merely manifest in physical terms what is already permanently etched into the Palestinian and Arab psyche — a permanent remembrance of Arab vulnerability and weakness at a certain time and place, a particular moment in history and geography when the reality of Arab community and humanity vanished instantly before the knives and bullets of a determined, brutal Jewish attack. Deir Yassin still haunts us because it still dehumanises us in two dimensions: it recalls the agony of past helplessness, and it warns of weakness, denial and vulnerability as the recurring nightmare of our possibly perpetual dehumanisation. For what is there to prevent us again from being paraded in trucks, shot in cold blood in quarries, and buried in mass graves in the lands of our ancestors — as has recently happened in central Europe, land of the Enlightenment, democracy and liberalism, where dehumanisation was further redefined this decade through the use of mass rape as an instrument of deliberate cruelty?

Like all atrocities, Deir Yassin left behind multiple victims — the dead and the living, the targets of the violence and also its perpetrators. A monument at Deir Yassin, within eyesight of Yad Vashem, could unlock powerful forces of truthfulness among Arabs and Israelis alike. It could permit both peoples, separately or together, to vanquish the pains of the past by ending the tendency by both sides to refuse to acknowledge the suffering and dehumanisation that each experienced in their own history. Most Arabs today tend to deny the totality of Jewish historical suffering primarily because most Israelis will not explicitly acknowledge Jewish responsibility for the violence that Jews and Israelis have used against Palestinians. Mutual denial and historical deception have not served these peoples well.

A memorial at Deir Yassin could transform the current cycle of mutual denial to a more morally responsible and historically constructive cycle of acknowledgement of the past, understanding, compassion and, ultimately, forgiveness and reconciliation. It would help to heal the still open and festering Palestinian wound that comes from the feeling that Palestinians do not exist, that their villages can be erased from the face of the earth by the hundreds, that their men can be paraded in trucks and slaughtered in

quarries. More than any other political gesture, a memorial to Deir Yassin would be an act of moral compensation that would allow Palestinians to see themselves, and Israelis, in a different, more constructive, way. For just as Deir Yassin is visible from Yad Vashem, so is Yad Vashem visible from Deir Yassin. Only Palestinians and Arabs whose humanity has been returned to them can truly see Yad Vashem — not just see it physically, but absorb its enormous moral and historical meaning, which most Arabs refuse to do as a conscious political act.

Jewish and Palestinian historical suffering are separated by many dimensions of time, place, scale and consequence, but they are united by a single fact: they can only be fully overcome by a process of rehumanisation that acknowledges the brutality and criminality of past deeds. That process has been under way for many years for Jews and Israelis, and it will continue for many more, as it should. A parallel process has not yet started, though, between Israelis and Palestinians. The importance of a memorial to Deir Yassin is not just that it could spark an Israeli rehumanisation of Palestinians: equally important, it could also spark a simultaneous Palestinian rehumanisation of Israelis.

Last year, the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation was inaugurated at Coventry University. It arose from a realisation that forgiveness and reconciliation raise two distinct but related issues with global consequences: "One, the fact that people need to take responsibility for their actions, and two, the importance of remorse, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation as vital elements in peacemaking and peace-keeping.... It is becoming clearer than ever that public apologies leading to a healing process and forgiveness... reaffirm the humanity of people often denied or brutalised during past conflict. In the long run, accepting responsibility for one's actions in the past, and expressing remorse and regret, may prove to be the most important elements in the process of healing and a prime condition for genuine peace and stability worldwide."

Deir Yassin was the site of a massacre; Yad Vashem recalls the evil of genocide. The awkward line of sight between the two suggests an opportunity for both Israelis and Palestinians finally to get beyond the agonies of their past vulnerabilities. And may these be the last memorials to atrocity in the Holy Land.

Costly tickets to get to Camp David

By Thomas L. Friedman

NEW YORK — So every one wants to go to Camp David, now. Yup, skip all those pesky interim steps in the Arab-Israeli peace process and just cut right to the bottom line. I like the idea — but everybody who wants to come has to buy a ticket. And it won't be cheap.

We know one thing about the history of the Arab-Israeli peace process: there is progress only under conditions of extreme pleasure or pain. You have a breakthrough because Arafat does a remarkable thing, flying off to Jerusalem, or because one or both sides are under such excruciating pain that they have to make unprecedented concessions.

The Oslo breakthrough happened only after Israelis tasted the intifada for too long and after Yasser Arafat was isolated and flat broke because he had sided with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the Gulf war.

The problem with the current moment is that neither side is ready to offer the other the needed pleasure for an unprecedented breakthrough, and neither is under enough pain to make unprecedented concessions.

So the United States has the choice: use the lure of Camp David as a way of trying to gradually rebuild enough pleasure to carry the process forward, or simply let Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat play out their reckless fantasies to their logical extremes.

If the parties want to opt

for Camp David, America should demand three admission tickets:

The first is that they each take steps to restore a modicum of trust without which any final-status negotiations would fail. Mr. Netanyahu must commit to a freeze on the building of any new settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank on expanding the size of any existing settlements. And Mr. Arafat should have to arrest every Hamas radical he can get his hands on.

Second, Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat must publicly recommit themselves to the core bargain of Oslo. That bargain stipulates that Palestinians will make a 100 per cent effort to facilitate a self-ruling Palestinian homeland in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Netanyahu violated that implicit bargain by engaging in unilateral steps in Jerusalem and the West Bank to create new facts on the ground before final-status talks. And Mr. Arafat violated that bargain by winking at a renewal of terrorism.

The third ticket is that both sides have to show a willingness to build the political coalitions necessary to support the only fair peace settlement possible. That means that Mr. Arafat has to start preparing his people for the fact that they are not going to get back 100 per cent of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. At best they will get somewhere between 65 and 85 per cent. If there is no Arab/Palestinian coalition

to ratify such a compromise deal, there is no sense going to Camp David.

And Mr. Netanyahu has to either build a new coalition or start preparing his own for a settlement that would offer Palestinians 65 to 85 per cent of the West Bank.

If the two men refuse to buy these tickets for Camp David, it means that they, or their constituencies, do not want to offer the pleasure needed for a final deal. In that case, regrettably, we will have to wait for more pain.

So bring it on. Let them trade an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, while they insist that they have a better path for their peoples than the Oslo peace process. Let them have the confrontation they so clearly want and richly deserve.

Let Palestinians show us how they will redeem Palestine with their "blood and spirit," as they keep chanting. Let them cheer their suicide bombers.

Let Israeli settlers gun down Palestinian youths. Let Mr. Netanyahu come to America and use every meeting he has with Congress and the press to delegitimise Mr. Arafat. (O.K., say you do delegitimise Yasser, then what? Palestinian leadership are you going to deal with? So you win CNN's Middle East Debating Trophy! Big deal.)

It is sad to think that it will require so much more pain to get both sides back from the brink. But it probably will.

The New York Times

The haredim and the secular — territory vs social habits

By Herb Keinson

AS SOON as the High Court handed down its decision on Jerusalem's Rehov Bar-Ilan on April 13, haredi politicians verbally took off after the justices, and some haredi protesters physically took to the streets.

And that was just the beginning. Everyone is expecting a massive demonstration on Rehov Bar-Ilan on Shabbat and — as Eda Haredi activist Yehuda Meshi-Zahav said — "a hot summer." But the haredi reaction, said Bar-Ilan University geography professor Yosef Shilhav, an authority on haredi-secular relations, stems from a basic misunderstanding of what the court said.

True, the court did overturn Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy's decision to close the street to traffic during prayer times on Shabbat and holidays, thereby opening the road on these days. But, in the same breath, the court said the road could be closed during prayers if a solution is found for the secular residents — estimated at 10 per cent — living along the street.

There is no doubt, said Shilhav, who has written extensively on haredi-

secular relations in Jerusalem and who is completing a book on haredi city management for the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, that Levy will find such a solution. "The street will eventually be closed on Shabbat," he predicted.

Shilhav's scenario: Levy will come back with a plan to close the street during prayer, and an argument will arise over the hours of prayer, since a minyan can be found in the neighbourhood around Bar-Ilan on Shabbat pretty much from dawn to dusk.

"People will stop driving on the street, because when they drive, they don't sit and wonder what time it is, they want to get where they are going. They will get used

to an alternate route, and use that route instead," he said.

Those who drive on the road on Shabbat, out of principle, will eventually tire — or leave the city — while the haredim, who are fighting for the rules on their own turf, will show staying power and

connection between religion and state. It is a sharp dispute over the character of Israel as a Jewish state or as a democratic state. It is a bitter argument over the character of Jerusalem."

In the greater dispute, over the character of the country, and even the city,

siege. Prof. Shlomo Hasson, also of the Floersheimer Institute and author of two books on haredi-secular relations in Jerusalem, said these sentiments are not unwarranted.

"The concern of the secular public is that the

committee. The religious parties also have 23 seats in the Knesset. Rehov Bar-Ilan was closed soon after the elections — showing a link between the political power of the religious parties and the situation on the ground.

Former Jerusalem deputy mayor Meron Benvenisti wrote in Yedioth Aharonot last week that after Bar-Ilan, Ramat Eshkol will be the next neighbourhood to "be abandoned" to the haredim. Amiram Gonen, another geographer with the Floersheimer Institute, said this is almost a given, since it is so close to the capital's haredi centre.

What is more significant, he said, is the likelihood that — because of haredi power in city hall — the yet unbuilt neighbourhoods of Har Homa and Givat Hamatos will also become haredi.

History has shown that, in general, the haredim win battles when they are fighting to control their own territory, and lose when they try to dictate norms of behaviour outside their own neighbourhoods. In Jerusalem, the haredim territory is growing.

The Jerusalem Post

"Rehov Bar-Ilan has ceased being just a street and has turned into a social issue.... It reflects deep political differences of opinion between the haredim and secular. It is not an argument over freedom of travel on Friday and Shabbat on Rehov Bar-Ilan. It is fundamentally a deep dispute over the connection between religion and state. It is a sharp dispute over the character of Israel as a Jewish state or as a democratic state. It is a bitter argument over the character of Jerusalem."

prevail. "In the public dialogue, Rehov Bar-Ilan has ceased being just a street and has turned into a social issue," Supreme Court President Aharon Barak wrote in his majority opinion.

"It reflects deep political differences of opinion between the haredim and secular. It is not an argument over freedom of travel on Friday and Shabbat on Rehov Bar-Ilan. It is fundamentally a deep dispute over the

the haredim are losing, Shilhav said. What they are winning are the skirmishes over their own territory, the fights to have control over their own proverbial "four cubits" of space.

One of the capital's paradoxes is that even as it has taken on a more secular feel over the last 15 years — more non-kosher restaurants, more entertainment open on Shabbat — the secular population is feeling more and more under

positions of power," he said. "It is impossible to ignore the municipal elections of 1993, and the national elections of 1996. The (secular) public has not yet felt the results of these changes, but is worried that it will."

The religious and haredi parties won 12 of the 31 seats on Jerusalem's City Council in 1993, and control the city's key portfolios, first and foremost the building and planning

World's longest bridge unnerves sleepy Uruguay town

By Jason Webb
Reuter

COLONIA DEL SACRAMENTO, Uruguay — Until they decided to build the longest bridge in the world, life in Colonia del Sacramento had barely changed since the town's new bull ring was closed after only two months in 1910.

Built on the sleepy coast of Uruguay by the Portuguese 300 years ago, Colonia is so quiet that motorists commonly balance thermos flasks of hot mate tea on their laps, sipping from metal straws as they steer.

The river plate lapped quietly at one end of the street of sighs, whose higgledy-piggledy houses probably earned the cobbled lane its name in the 18th century when they served as brothels for garrisoned troops. The southern sun shines for months on quiet plazas and whitewashed houses with lumpy

orange tiles in the town's old centre.

UNESCO in 1995 confirmed what residents had long felt about Colonia, naming it part of humanity's cultural heritage.

But plans to spend a billion dollars on a bridge spanning the 40 km of the brackish River Plate estuary that separates Uruguay from its much bigger neighbour Argentina has left many of colonia's 30,000 inhabitants uneasy.

Local authorities gleefully predict that investors will pump \$400 million into projects after the bridge is built, swelling the town's population to an estimated 120,000 by 2015 and dragging tranquil Colonia into the 21st century.

As the town still seems to linger in the 19th century, that means it might skip the 20th altogether.

"These new times require new things," said Mayor Miguel Jimeno, who believes there is opposition to the plan

because Uruguayans are naturally stick-in-the-muds and intimidated by change. The bridge, he said, may prove stressful at first but it will be profitable for the town and for the country.

"It's like childbirth, it may hurt but it will bring much joy," he said.

Those opposed to the bridge want what is on the Argentine side of the river to stay where it is: the sprawling megalopolis of Buenos Aires, a tease, late 20th-century mix of portable-phone-wielding yuppies and grimy patches of poverty.

Argentines have long taken ferries across the river for some peace and quiet and tourism has for years been Colonia's main source of income. But some fear a profitable trickle of day-trippers may swell into an unmanageable swarm and that Buenos Aires will export its traffic and swallow Colonia.

Maximo Pontet is one of those who has doubts. "Colonia, it's just a love-

ly quiet town. There aren't many bad things here," the 86-year old Pontet said, sunning himself on a weekday in one of the town's leafy plazas. "But they are going to come, eh. Big cities, like Buenos Aires, in them there's room for good people and bad and everybody. And them rascals, after this bridge they're going to come more over here more quickly," he added, shaking with mischievous laughter.

Another resident, an Argentine woman who had fled across the River Plate with her family to escape Buenos Aires, fears the big city will come galloping after her across the bridge.

"Progress is not bad," she said, as her young sons played by their house in a street almost deserted of cars. "The union of countries and trade is not a bad thing. But I think they will have to take a great deal of care for this little place not to be swallowed up

by the great wolf of Buenos Aires."

Studies show the bridge is feasible if it attracts at least 7,000 vehicles a day. Neither government is willing to pay a cent to finance it, so it would be built entirely by private companies, which would then charge each vehicle a toll estimated by authorities at about \$70.

The bridge would cut 300 km off the land journey from Buenos Aires to Uruguay's capital Montevideo and hours off the journey to Brazil. It would also be a powerful symbol of the growing integration within Mercosur, South America's infant equivalent of the European Union.

The idea was first broached in the last century but the commission to get the bridge constructed was not established by the Uruguayan and Argentine governments until 1985, and the real impetus to get the project under way came with the creation of Mercosur in the early 1990s.

The commission plans to call for bids to build the bridge next year, although there is still no firm timetable. But even some who favour the plan express private doubts. They say its builders would have to charge an impossibly high toll, more than \$100 per car, to make it profitable.

If the bridge project fell through, it would not be Colonia's first failed stab at grandeur. The town's enormous bull ring is now fenced off from the public because its brick skin is peeling off dangerously from the iron girders imported especially from Britain for its construction.

Built for what was a fortune in 1910, it was designed to lure rich tourists from Argentina, where bullfighting was illegal. But two months later, after only eight fights, they banned bullfighting in Uruguay too.

Randa Habib's corner

Cleanliness — a great virtue

WE HAVE always been proud to state that Amman tops the list of the cleanest cities in the region. It is certainly true, but we cannot attribute this state of hygiene to our individual effort but rather to the "orange army's" trash collectors, deployed in big numbers, in a continued drive to keep our city clean.

As matter of fact, we have to admit that we are very messy people. Some of us do get angry when we witness, every so often, people throwing papers and soda cans from their cars as if littering were the most natural thing on earth. And since most of the mobilised trash collectors are not even Jordanians, but in their majority Egyptians, we litter but we do not collect, so it has become a habit.

Some people proposed that the TV run a "candid camera" programme, which could shed some light on the peculiar attitudes of some drivers and the heaps of trash that come out of their cars. I do think it is a great idea, and such a pioneering reel could render people shameful of their attitude once they face reality.

As for areas of attraction, mainly tourist sites, the problem is even more complicated. There are no trash collectors to follow each and every picnic-goer or visitor to the Dead Sea, Wadi Rum, Petra or Jerash.

Some families tend to take out an assorted cuisine in the open air. One can find excuses for litter workers who plan to spend the day out, but why should they litter tens of metres around their picnic spots? Often we stumble upon thousands of soda cans, food leftovers, and even baby diapers, on the shoulders of otherwise fascinating tree-lined roads.

Cleanliness is indeed a great virtue, but we have to live up to the clean image of our city and work hard, collectively, in order to maintain our country clean.

After all, it is our duty to keep the cities shining because such a state reflects the cleanliness of our own houses.

Touchscreen kiosks offer 'self-service' government

By Keith Walker

PLANS FOR a nationwide network of touchscreen computer kiosks which will enable the public to access government services 24 hours a day have been announced by Brito's Public Service Minister Roger Freeman. The kiosks, which will be situated on street corners, in libraries and in post offices, will allow people to renew driving licences, pay taxes, apply for grants or benefits and ask for information. In a pilot scheme, the first kiosks have been opened in London, Manchester and Glasgow, in Scotland. "The technology exists to deliver 'self-service' government to the public and business. I believe people will be able to do these things when and where they wish in high streets and libraries, at home or at work. Instant or nearly instant responses will be available in most cases," said Mr. Freeman.

The plan was the centrepiece of a Green Paper on "electronic government" which also calls for the linking of databases in government departments, such as social security, the Inland Revenue, the National Health Service and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). It is hoped this will save money and help cut benefit, tax and passport fraud. The Green Paper also addresses the issues of electronically "signing" documents, perhaps using a smart card, and other potential security issues. The paper, entitled "government direct", is the first to be simultaneously published on CD-Rom and can also be found on the Internet at www.open.gov.uk/cit/gdi-rec/ind/btm.

In a separate project at the end of last year, British Telecommunications (BT) installed the first 20 of 200 planned touchscreen kiosks in London. These will be installed in hotels, libraries, shopping areas and universities and offer news and weather information, Internet browsing and online shopping for items such as theatre and cinema tickets.

"Opening up the market in international telecoms will bring increased competition which means lower call charges for homes and businesses alike. It will also make the U.K. more attractive to inward investors who will take our cheaper, high-quality communications services into account when locating their European operations," Britain's Science and Technology Minister Ian Taylor said.

Computer-relayed messages on Britain's telephone

network is the basis of a new national warning system developed by British Telecommunications (BT) under a feasibility study commissioned by the Home Office. The system — believed to be the first of its kind in the world — would be able to warn entire towns of the presence of a threat to life or property. One person, using a computer, could call up a map of any part of the country and outline an incident area on the screen. Every telephone number in the area, including those not listed in directories, would be pulled automatically from the BT system and an automated message, typed into the computer and electronically converted into speech, dialled to each number. The computer would be able to identify which calls were unsuccessful and try them again later. A continuous ringing tone could be used to deter hoaxers and bypass telephone answering machines, which are activated by intermittent tones. BT calculates that the system could warn the first 1,000 people in five minutes and a town of 75,000 people in 45 minutes.

£30 million traffic control system planned

A £30 million initiative for a ground-based version of air traffic control systems, with information centres redirecting vehicles away from congested routes to clearer roads, was also announced by Britain's Transport Minister John Wauchope last year. Private companies were being asked to submit proposals on how to set up, fund and operate the scheme. Three regional control centres would track the movement of cars, lorries and buses along 6,500 miles of motorway and trunk roads across the country. Each road would be lined with sensors able to detect when traffic is slowing and building into a jam. The electronic information would be relayed to the relevant control centre, which would then display warnings on roadside signs and through local radio stations, suggesting alternative routes. Lawrie Haynes, chief executive of the Highways Agency, said: "We want to monitor conditions more effectively and to improve the quality of information passed onto the motorist."

Britain's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has opened 19 Local Support Centres as part of its Information Society Initiative. The centres give impartial advice, demonstrations, training and consultancy services to newcomers to the Net and ISDN (integrated

services digital network). The centres are aimed at small and medium-sized businesspeople in an effort to encourage them to trade electronically. Recent DTI research showed that although two-thirds of small and medium-sized businesses in Britain have computers, only a fifth of them trade electronically. By the end of this year, there will be 50 such centres throughout the country.

An Oxford-based bookseller is planning to increase the number of book titles it has on the Internet to almost 3 million and expand into Europe and North America. The Internet Book Shop (IBS), which in 1993 became the first bookseller to go online, lets people read sample extracts, and invites customers to leave their own reviews of books on the site. Using net retailing software from Microsoft, IBS has introduced an automated sales order processing and purchasing cycle and a system for gathering marketing information on each customer so that suitable titles can be recommended. Users can activate subject searches, and downloading is activated by one click of a mouse. IBS can be found at <http://www.booksbop.co.uk>

Shopping via the Internet

The first supermarket in Britain to offer its customers an online shopping service through the Internet was opened by Tesco in November. The pilot scheme is available to customers living within five miles of the branch near to Heathrow Airport in west London. The service allows customers to choose from a 20,000-item range of goods and order directly from a web page using a predefined account and credit card details. Prices charged are exactly the same as in the store but there is a service charge of £5 an order. Items are chosen from categories (eg bakery, delicatessen, pharmacy) and placed in a virtual trolley on the screen. Payment is made by credit card, and goods can be delivered the following day or on any day selected, to a maximum of 30 days.

Britain's 1,067 Jobcentres have also been linked by a powerful new computer network. Called the Labour Market System, it involves 21,000 PCs, 1,067 servers and 6,000 printers, and handles five million transactions a day. The Department for Education and Employment has announced. The system enables jobseekers to search for vacancies throughout the country and cuts down on fraudulent

claims for the new Jobseeker's Allowance by preventing multiple claims by the same individual at different Jobcentres.

Computers take over police ID parades

Two of Britain's police forces announced computer-based systems which will supersede the traditional time-consuming and tedious identity parade. In the system developed by West Yorkshire police, in the north of England, witnesses will be shown a video tape of seven people, six of which are taken from a database of video files held by the police. Suspects are responsible for choosing the six other participants from a database of volunteers and convicted criminals. With their solicitors, the suspects have complete control over which people from the database are chosen. Each video clip is filmed in front of a white background, with identical lighting. The suspect is taped in exactly the same environment and asked to perform exactly the same tasks as he or she would in a traditional identity parade. The resultant clip is then sent electronically to police headquarters where a complete video of the suspect and six others is made and sent back to the local station for viewing by a witness. Meanwhile, police in Scotland are claiming a world first for a system that can call up any known criminal for a computerised ID parade. When a crime is reported at a local police station, the witness description of the suspect is fed into the computer, which produces pictures of a range of possible suspects within seconds. The witness is then shown a number of screens, containing six images at a time, until an identification is made.

British scientists developing a rival to LCDs

British scientists are using a £3 million Titania krypton fluoride laser at the government-owned Rutherford Appleton Laboratory.

farmers have joined a government-backed computer network which gives them up-to-the-minute information on all topics related to farming, from weather forecasts to forward grain prices. The network, Farming On-Line, is run over the National Grid's telecommunication network by Energis. It is aimed at the many hundreds of farmers who spend long periods of the working day in isolated areas. Using the system they can now, at the touch of a keyboard, access information they need to make decisions. The system also enables farmers to "talk" together electronically. It is estimated that Britain's 80,000 commercial farms use around 40,000 personal computers.

A security system, designed to alert hospital staff when a baby is moved from its cot without the use of an electronic swipe card, has been developed by a British company, Movement Control System. The alarm also sounds if the baby's heartbeat or breathing stop. The device can also be used to lock doors and alert security in the event of an emergency.

Steigenberger Reservation Service ends its annual meeting

THE ANNUAL board meeting of the "Steigenberger Reservation Service" ended at the Regency Palace Hotel yesterday. It was attended by over 80 participants of hotel proprietors and general managers from around the world. They represent an independent elite group of hotels linked together by the world's most up-to-date reservation system.

Activities at the meetings were attended by Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Bilalji and the sessions were concluded in the presence of Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawea.

Special arrangements were made for the participants to visit various tourism and archaeological sites. The participants said they were deeply impressed by the conference and the services offered by the Regency Palace Hotel and their admiration of Jordan's progress and development.

Oford, to make flat display screens for use in computers, televisions and head-up displays. If current performance tests are successful, the screens will be thinner than a liquid crystal display (LCD), cheaper to make and with resolution up to 100 times sharper. The new screens, called laterally emitting thin-film electrode luminescent (Leftel) panels, work in a similar way to conventional technology. Dr. Bob Stevens, of Nottingham Trent University, who is involved in the research, said: "The Leftel screen has a layer that emits light a little like the phosphor on a television tube. This kind of tube was used on the first Apollo mission because it is rugged but nobody has been able to make them emit enough strong blue light to create the full-colour spectrum. So far they give just red, green and yellow."

Research suggested that by changing the composition of the light-emitting layer and subjecting it to a laser pulse it will be able to give off a blue light of the required strength. The university has teamed up with three industrial partners to create the first full-colour screens, hopefully within two years. It is likely the laptop computer market will be the first major user. The LCD screens of laptops account for more than half the cost of the computers because they are difficult to make. The coloured pixels

Art students' work goes on the web

The Slade School of Art at University College London is to present the work of its students and guest artists on its web site, it has been announced. The site currently carries course information and two artistic pieces and will be expanded next year as part of the school's aim to fully utilise the net and to enable artists to use it as an interface between the real and virtual worlds. The site is at www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/slade/

Among the winners in the British Computer Society's 24th annual awards scheme was a system that can read music quickly and accurately. Sibehus 7, considered by the judges to have made an outstanding contribution to IT, operates with music notation as word processors do with words. The programme incorporates many hundreds of rules of music notation and engraving to produce quality output. Another award went to Microcosm Plus which allows users to build maps through large amounts of data, so that they can find the information they need quickly and efficiently.

A third winner was British Telecom for its Inter-Network Call Accounting software that tracks the billing of telephone calls routed through its network by other telecoms vendors. It collects records from one network to call operators elsewhere and verifies that they have been called. It can process 1,000 call records every second and tracks 45 million calls each day.


SRS HOTELS WORLDWIDE

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AMMAN - JORDAN
FOR BECOMING A MEMBER
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PARTNER OF STEIGENBERGER HOTELS
AS OF 1997 CLASSIFICATION OF
SRS HOTELS WORLDWIDE
WISHING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE
HOTEL MORE PROGRESS AND ONGOING
PROSPEROUS REPUTATION

STEIGENBERGER DELUXE COLLECTION HOTELS

THE REGENCY - AMMAN - JORDAN
HOTEL AL KHUZAMA - AL RIYADH - SAUDI ARABIA
HOTEL SACHER - VIENNA
HOTEL DON CARLOS - MARSABELLA
THE PARK LANE HOTEL - LONDON - ENGLAND
HOTEL BEAU RIVAGE - GENEVA - SWITZERLAND
BAYERISCHER HOF - MUNICH
STEIGENBERGER BERLIN - BERLIN
ROYAL WINDSOR HOTEL - BRUSSELS
GRAND HOTEL - STOCKHOLM
STEIGENBERGER BELVEDERE - DAVOS SWITZERLAND
HOTEL FRANKFURTER HOF - FRANKFURT - SWITZERLAND
HOTEL EUROPAISCHER HOF - BADEN BADEN GERMANY
THE HAY ADAMS HOTEL - WASHINGTON - U.S.A.
HOTEL LOTTE SEOUL - KOREA
THE PARK LANE - HONG KONG
THE PAN PACIFIC HOTELS

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ILO: Migrant workers face fraud, exploitation

GENEVA (AFP) — The world's growing ranks of temporary migrant workers face fraud and a host of other ills as private agencies increasingly dominate the business, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said in a report.

The pool of global guest workers is estimated at more than 42 million, not including refugees, asylum-seekers, illegal workers or those from former Soviet countries, said the report, titled "Protecting the Most Vulnerable of Today's Workers."

Private, fee-charging recruitment agencies control as much as 80 per cent of labour movements from

Asian to Arab countries, with their major markets Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

"Undesirable consequences" of private sector involvement, according to the report, include fraud, exorbitant fees and unacceptable conditions of employment for migrant workers, with unskilled and non-technical labourers particularly at risk.

Fraudulent practices range from soliciting applications and demanding fees for non-existent jobs to selection of applicants on the amount of money they are willing to pay to get the job.

The trend towards temporary employment is

prevalent in both developed and developing countries, says the report.

For instance in Canada, a traditional immigration country, the average annual inflow of temporary workers was more than double the number of permanent immigrants over the past decade.

The number of migrant workers in South Korea has nearly trebled from around 44,000 in 1992 to 136,000 in 1996.

The story is much the same in the former socialist countries. In the Czech Republic there were 14,500 work-permit holders in mid-1992 and 67,300 in 1996.

UAE sees higher spending, deficit in 1997

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has approved higher spending for 1997 with a slight increase in the deficit, but economists said it could again be eliminated.

Federal expenditure was projected at 19.86 billion dirhams (\$5.41 billion) and revenues at 18.87 billion dirhams (\$5.14 billion), leaving a shortfall of around \$270 million.

This compares with a forecast deficit of \$240 million in 1996, when spending was projected at 18.25 billion dirhams (\$4.97 billion).

The federal budget for calendar 1997, starting on Jan. 1, was endorsed by the cabinet but still has to be ratified by President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

The official news agency WAM gave no details of the budget but official sources said more than 40 per cent of the expenditure would be allocated for salaries for the nearly 50,000 civil servants.

"The increase in spending was due to the introduction of new jobs for nationals and pay rises ordered by the president last year," one source said.

The UAE federal budget is in theory financed through half the income of each of the Gulf country's seven emirates. But in effect, almost all the funds come from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the main oil producers in the UAE.

"The deficit in the UAE federal budget is not a problem as it could be shored up through additional contributions from those two emirates. I think it could again be wiped out or slashed as there are expectations oil prices will remain firm this year," an Abu Dhabi-based economic analyst said.

A surge in oil prices in 1996 prompted Abu Dhabi and Dubai to increase allocations for the federal budget and this turned a projected deficit into a surplus of around \$970 million by the end of the third quarter. Bankers said they believed the shortfall had been eliminated by the end of 1996.

The UAE produces around 2.16 million barrels per day of crude under a quota assigned by the 11-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Africa seeks debt relief to fuel flickering upturn

JOHANNESBURG (R1) — It may not mean much to the continent's millions of shack-dwellers, but Africa has just posted two successive years of growth and could do even better in 1997.

Half of the 48 sub-Saharan nations grew at least five per cent in the past two years, and the World Bank forecasts overall African growth of 3.8 per cent a year over the next decade.

Sceptics point to a boom in commodity prices that may not last, and good rains, for the improved performance.

But more and more African countries are starting to reap the benefits of free-market reforms after the lost decade of the 1980s — when per capita income fell by over one per cent a year.

African states — with varying degrees of enthusiasm — are adopting the policies demanded by international investors and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Now it is payback time, according to African leaders.

Privatisation, trade liberalisation and scrapping capital restrictions may breathe some life into decrepit economies, but the world's poorest continent is likely to remain just that unless it receives relief from its crippling debts.

A new move on multilateral debt relief, due to be discussed at the twice-yearly meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washing-

ton from April 23 to 29, offers a glimmer of hope.

The debt initiative for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) scheme was agreed in principle by the IMF, World Bank and Paris Club of creditor nations last year, but it is taking longer to implement than originally hoped.

The IMF and the World Bank last month approved a debt relief plan for Uganda, the first candidate. But the timetable has yet to be agreed with some countries wanting completion very soon, but others, including the United States, recommending that it take place only in April 1997.

British charity Oxfam says delays will have a huge social cost in Uganda — paid in lives — and is lobbying for a completion date to be set at this month's Washington meeting.

When implemented, the initiative could reduce Uganda's \$3.4 billion external debt, most inherited from the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, by about \$385 million.

Uganda is a test case for other HIPC states — most of them in Africa — with unsustainable debt. Ivory coast, Burkina Faso and Bolivia are other immediate candidates for the plan. Later, the World Bank says, it would look at Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mali, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome.

Servicing Africa's international debt of about \$340 billion chews up \$24

billion annually — money that the poorest states can ill afford.

"Debt relief can free up hard currency for economic development — that is why it is so important," said Hania Farhan, African economist at ING Barings in Johannesburg.

Candidates for HIPC relief will need, in general, to have a six-year record under IMF tutelage that shows strong economic reform efforts, although this may vary from case to case.

The rules promise to be tough — too tough, according to African finance ministers who met in Addis Ababa earlier this month. While 33 of the 41 HIPC countries were in Africa, the rigidity of criteria meant few would benefit, they said.

The new debt relief plan, when it comes, may help those states which have used the IMF line. But across the continent, the economic picture is likely to remain patchy, as ever held hostage to politics.

South Africa's peaceful transition has underpinned stability in the southern cone and a planned 12-nation free trade zone could spread its know-how and capital throughout the region. At the same time Angola has just sworn in a national unity government after two decades of civil war, and reforms are boosting living standards in Malawi and Mozambique.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Prices as at 21/04/97 19:16									
US Dollar	1.7010	0.6120	1.4452	125.55	1.3973	1695.25	1.5148	5.7447	
DE Mark	0.3678	0.3688	0.3688	73.74	0.2299	985.60	1.1245	5.3737	
GB Sterling	1.6340	2.7820	2.3664	206.45	2.2632	2771.79	3.1289	9.3903	
CH Franc	0.8919	117.82	0.4229	96.52	0.9960	1171.81	132.21	3.9718	
JP Yen	0.0080	1.3534	0.4868	1.1504	1.1121	13.48	152.18	4.5718	
CA Dollar	0.7187	1.2284	0.4375	1.0805	1.11	1205.47	1.3742	4.1201	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0032	0.3608	0.0853	1351.17	0.8245	11.28	3.3894	
NL Guilder	0.5922	98.91	0.3197	75.56	0.5832	7.7003	985.74	3.0623	
FR Franc	0.1741	0.2959	0.1064	25.1666	0.2432	33.28	33.2800		

Middle Eastern Currencies									
US Dollar	0.7080	3.7604	0.5770	3.6400	0.3030	3.6710	1540.00	3.3895	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	0.2872	0.3324	0.1412	0.4280	5.1850	2175.14	4.7674	
GB Sterling	0.2898	0.1688	0.1905	0.07	0.0808	0.98	410.82	0.9038	
Bahrain Dinar	2.88	1.3791	0.9468	9.68	0.8036	0.74	4085.21	8.9913	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	0.0832	1.01	423.08	0.9312	
Kuwait Dinar	3.3003	2.3368	12.3778	1.3441	12.01	12.12	5092.51	0.9312	
Emirates Dinar	0.2734	0.1929	1.0215	1.0227	0.0825	1.01	419.50	0.9233	
Lebanese/1000	8.65	0.4597	2.4363	0.2448	2.3436	0.1968	2.3838	2.2008	
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2089	1.1065	0.1112	1.0739	0.0894	1.0831	454.35	

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Brent	18.00 17.80	SA Riyal	0.2688 0.4535 0.16318 0.38698 33.9008
WTI	20.25 19.85	AE Dirham	0.2724 0.45348 0.16671 0.3939 34.2258
Bony	18.00 17.60	KW Dinar	3.3003 5.81167 2.01979 4.77327 414.594
Dubai	18.64 16.65	BH Dinar	0.5770 4.91264 1.62336 3.83583 33.3333
UL Gas	188.00 188.00	CY Pound	1.9825 3.3437 1.2023 2.8412 246.801

Metal Prices			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
	12/18	12/19	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
Gold (oz's)	342.7	343.2	USD	5.53	5.59	5.61	6.00	6.23
Silver (oz's)	4.77	4.79	GBP	6.00	6.31	6.36	6.69	6.88
Platinum (oz's)	381.5	382.5	JPY	0.53	0.56	0.59	0.50	0.71
AL (3 Months)	1564	1565	DEM	3.11	3.00	3.00	3.12	3.19
CU (3 Months)	2286		FRF	3.34	3.42	3.53	3.55	3.58
Zinc (3 Months)	1247	1250	CHF	1.80	1.82	1.88	1.83	2.00
Lead (3 Months)	0		ITL	7.15	6.88	6.83	5.96	6.96
Ni (3 Months)	7380	7385						

Main Equity Indices									
New York	DOW JONES	5711.58	8.53	0.12	6721.21	6884.69	6703.55		
New York	S&P 500	768.98	0.54	0.07	767.3	764.75	766.34		
London	FT-SE 100	4328.7	18.2	0.42	4328.7	4299.2	4310.5		
Tokyo	Nikkei 225	18551.86	199.52	1.08	18560.7	18399.5	18352.1		
Paris	CAC 40	2522.67	-24.98	-0.98	2528.12	2507.75	2547.54		
Frankfurt	DAX	3347.38	3.19	0.1	3348.01	3325.01	3344.39		

Energy		JOD Cross Rates	
Coffee (c/lbs)	215.83	US Dollar	0.708 0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1483	GB Sterling	1.1574 1.1632
Sugar (\$/ton)	312.9	DE Mark	0.4152 0.4173
Wheat (\$/ton)	168	CH Franc	0.4884 0.4906
Soya (c/lbs)	23.46	FR Franc	0.1231 0.1237
Tea (stg/lb)	142	JP Yen	0.5645 0.5673
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	NL Guilder	0.3895 0.3713
Rice (\$/ton)	480	IT Lira	0.4192 0.4213

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Poor's feat
- Clear from a charge
- Spicy sauce
- Short and thick
- Type of chemie
- Fall
- Lucca money
- Books
- Coup d'
- Kind
- Deer
- Type of bank
- Where hops get hot
- Little person
- Illuminating name?
- Becomes terrified
- Openings in chess
- Hangs loosely
- Lots and lots
- Copper product
- Candidate's ordeal
- Inaugural event
- Moist
- At one — swoop
- Insertion mark
- Sea that's a lake
- Collector's item?
- Kind of skirt
- Desert
- GA city
- Musketear
- Certain U.S. native
- Tough lovingly
- Part of Asia

DOWN

- Strolled
- Tokyo airport
- Landing site of old
- Candy container of a kind
- Terminate
- Schooners
- Arboreal rodents
- Most dolorous
- Must
- Oscar winner
- Dealing with a rebellion
- Sturm — Drang
- '50s nickname
- Norse god
- Tannin retrieval
- Plant part
- Paddy plant
- Trueheart
- Breathe rapidly
- Triumphs
- Cigar var.
- Dumbbell
- Field
- Repast
- Competition of a kind
- Agent
- Desert group
- Chatter
- Old-time member
- Grain awn
- Rays
- Docile
- Mustard family
- Call in an unknown
- pro nobis
-
- Patriotic gp.

by Janet R. Bender

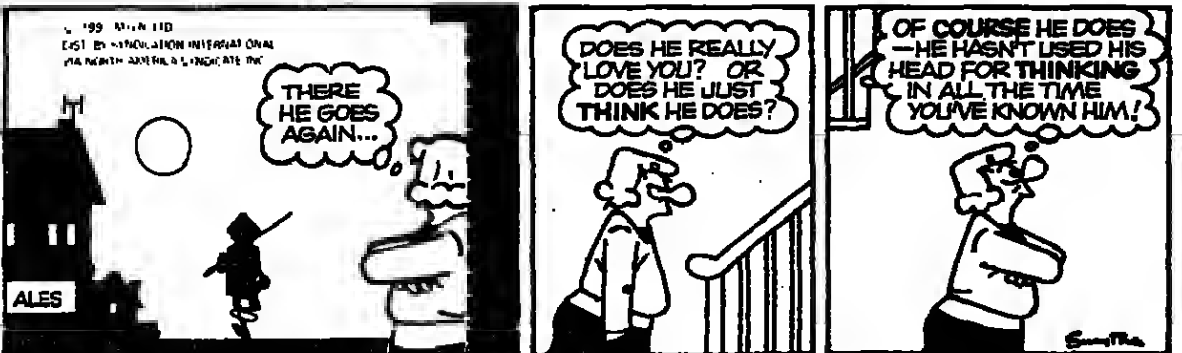
LAZY ADDER MAES
ISEE FIERY URGE
FIRST IMPRESSION
TAO WEEPS LEAST
TIL TAU
SECOND IN COMMAND
HAOLE DERN ROE
ORALS AVE PEROT
OTT THREE AROSE
THIRD WORLOPOWER
ARI RES
AROMA SANER MTG
FOURTH CLASS MAIL
ALSO MOANS ARNE
REED STRAY OXEN

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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This is a good day today to contact some friends who are happy and full of life, as these people will improve your mood considerably. Later this evening will a good time to stay home and relax with your loved ones.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be innovative today in the handling of your routines, and your superiors will be impressed with your efforts. If you need a favour from someone later this evening, ask directly, and get it without any difficulty.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You can make some great new contact today, however, don't get too involved with people you don't know well. Be careful while driving on the highway, thereby avoid any difficulties which could be in your way.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Let your mind off recreation today, and try to be more efficient in business matters. Do something which will delight your mate and make him or her more appreciative of your efforts to be more romantic.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can accomplish a great deal in the business world today, so put home affairs aside for the time being. You should not overeat tonight or you could regret the action the next morning with a sour stomach.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Instead of running off on any tangent today, stick to your routines and accomplish much as a result of your efforts. Don't say anything harsh to your fellow associates, since you might need their assistance in the days ahead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get away from your loved ones for a while today so you won't feel so hemmed in. You will appreciate them more when you get back. Later this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people for good advice.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) It is important that you are more thoughtful of your friends and more tactful with your loved ones at this time, however, don't overdo it. Later this evening you can meet with fellow associates and develop a plan of action for your success.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Deal with fellow business associates in an open and honest manner, so that you won't be embarrassed from any secrets. Stop worrying so much over petty details nobody cares about and concentrate on the important things.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Show more affection for your mate today, and improve the understanding between you immensely. You should not allow a private concern to spoil your mood, so keep your head up and your heart in the right place.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Stop being so subservient to a greedy person today who has been influencing your decisions. Get together later this evening with some upbeat friends and have a good time at recreational activities which are enjoyable.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be careful today that you don't confide your secrets to people who could make difficulties for you. Be very careful in motion of any kind, especially while driving on the highway and thereby avoid any difficulties.

Birthstone of April:
Diamond — Amethyst

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Phosphate company to float JD50 million and \$100 million of bonds in Jordan and overseas

**** THE JORDAN Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) will be floating JD50 million bonds in the local market and \$100 million bonds in the international market following the approval of the general assembly at an extraordinary meeting held last week. The proceeds from the sale of these bonds will go towards financing a part of the second-stage projects at the Shidiyeh mine in addition to a local \$25 million bridging loan to finance early production at the Shidiyeh mine. JPMC Board Chairman Mahdi Farhan said, noting that the bridging loan will be repaid from the proceeds of the dollar bonds which will be floated on the international market.**

Dr. Farhan indicated that the second stage of developing the Shidiyeh raw materials has become an absolute necessity to enable the company to continue phosphate production at amounts that would be enough to cover the requirements of the international market and the rising needs for the local manufacturing of phosphatic fertilisers.

The JPMC chief said the second stage of the plan to develop the Shidiyeh raw phosphate aims at boosting the production capacity from 3.25 million tonnes a year to 7.5 million tonnes annually by the year 2000. Such an increase, he pointed out, will go to meet the increasing demand for high-quality phosphate and to compensate the decline in production from Al Hasa and Al Abiad mines.

In addition, the higher output from Shidiyeh mine will be used to meet the needs of the joint projects with India and Japan. The project with the Indians will consume about 750,000 tonnes of raw phosphate annually whereas the project with Japan will consume 80,000 tonnes annually of phosphoric acid. Both ventures are expected to start production in the second quarter of this year.

Dr. Farhan revealed that the cost of the second stage programme at Shidiyeh is estimated at \$248 million including the financing of the early stage production which would take nearly three years to implement. According to JPMC studies, the chairman pointed out, 30 per cent of the financing required could be secured from the company's own resources with the remaining 70 per cent from outside financing in the form of bonds or loans from the World Bank, the Islamic Bank in Jeddah or other Arab and other international funds. These financiers have participated in financing the first stage and expressed willingness to study funding the second stage.

The chairman told the general assembly that raw phosphate reserves in the Shidiyeh area are estimated at 1.2 billion tonnes. He said that according to the 1997-2001 plan, JPMC would be able to market no less than 6.6 million tonnes this year, 7.5 million tonnes in 1998, 7.6 million tonnes in 1999, 8.8 million tonnes in the year 2000 and 10.2 million tonnes in 2001 if enough output can be achieved (Al Dustour).

Head of clearing association accuses Lloyd's Register of exceeding limits

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The head of Jordan Clearance Companies Association (JCCA) Salim Jadoun, urged the government Monday to interfere and stop what is called "provocative measures" by Lloyd's Register is entrusted by the U.N. to inspect goods bound for Iraq.

Mr. Jadoun said that the inspection by Lloyd's was "humiliating to Jordan's sovereignty" and infringes by the agreement signed between the Kingdom and the London-based firm, by insisting on inspecting Jordan bound cargo.

"According to the agreement, Lloyd's has the right to inspect only Iraq-bound goods, but unfortunately it exceeds its limit and inspect Jordan-bound goods as well," Mr. Jadoun said in a telephone interview with the Jordan Times.

"This causes delays and raises costs and should be

stopped," he added.

Lloyd's inspection, which started on August 1994, replaced a maritime inspection of Jordan-bound ships which was imposed by the United Nations following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The inspection was in line with the U.N. sanctions against Baghdad, permitting only humanitarian goods to reach Iraq. But in 1994, Lloyd's replaced the U.S.-spearheaded sea inspection.

Mr. Jadoun said at least 100 Jordanian firms are suffering from this inspection "which leads to financial loss and delay in delivering goods to its final destination."

"We have informed the Ministry of Trade and Industry to interfere and stop these activities by Lloyd's but so far nothing has been done," Mr. Jadoun said.

He added that Lloyd's activities harm not only Jordan-bound goods but also the reexport of goods.

Greenfield acquires Koor unit

TEL AVIV (R) — Greenfield Industries Inc. of the United States has acquired Israel's Hanita Metal Works Ltd. from Koor Industries Ltd. for \$20.3 million, Greenfield and Koor have said.

The two companies said Greenfield, based in Augusta, Georgia, also agreed to assume Hanita's \$13.6 million in debt.

Hanita, makes high-performance end mills and other products for the metal-working industry. It has a plant in northern Israel and distribution facilities in the United States. It had sales last year of about \$27 million.

"This acquisition, which will become a part of our industrial products group, continues to support our strategy of adding complementary businesses to our existing market segments," said Greenfield's President, Paul Jones.

He said the acquisition would enable Greenfield to strengthen its market position in cutting tools, particularly aerospace.

British Bank offers one of the most accessible personal packages to employees of leading firms in Jordan together with the only credit card currently on offer in the market. The message, that British Bank is here for the private individual as well as the corporate customer has been welcomed in the market place. With the accent on well trained approachable staff, British Bank is demonstrating its commitment to providing service quality unparalleled in Jordan.

Oman Eurobond paves way for more Gulf issues

DUBAI (R) — Oman's successful debut on the Eurobond market could prompt other Gulf borrowers to look to the international market to finance costly development projects, analysts have said.

"It could be the beginning of a trend. International investors are very hungry for Gulf paper to diversify their investments," Henry Azzam, chief economist at Saudi Arabia's National Commercial Bank, told Reuters by telephone from Jeddah.

"This is a very important issue. The international market is hungry for this kind of issue, a fact proven by the demand," said leading Saudi economist Ihsan Bu Hulaiga.

"It is creating a benchmark for Omani firms and may be the first of many," an investment manager at a large Omani bank said.

The small, independent oil producer, with the region's most liberal economy, issued its first international bond in March.

The \$225 million, five-year

issue was twice oversubscribed and priced at a 73 basis point spread over U.S. Treasury notes. Underwriter J.P. Morgan said the issue size was increased from an expected \$150 million due to the good demand.

Standard Poor's assigned a triple-B-minus foreign currency rating to the issue.

Omani officials have said the bond was designed to put Oman, on the international investors' map and diversify sources of funding for development projects.

"At least we now have a benchmark for the whole region," Mr. Azzam said. If Gulf firms could get favourable rates they could be prompted to finance projects through a combination of commercial loans and international bonds, he added.

"It is a very good avenue for financing projects in the Gulf as certain Gulf countries are sensitive to sovereign financing, but Eurobonds are widely acceptable," Mr. Bu Hulaiga

said. Economists say about \$10 billion needs to be spent annually to upgrade the region's basic infrastructure in the next decade — a task which has lured scores of international contractors.

The state-dominated Gulf economies — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman — are trying to encourage the private sector to take a lead in developing infrastructure. Governments, stung by past overspending, are now less willing to finance large projects themselves.

"Some Gulf countries are shying away from sovereign bonds by asking institutions, like state-owned firms, to seek funds from the international market themselves," Mr. Bu Hulaiga said.

In December, the Qatar majority state-owned Ras Laffan gas project launched two bond issues worth a total \$1.2 billion to finance one of the emirate's three major gas export projects.

Analysts said as Gulf countries' public finances improved, it was likely that the market would see more international borrowings by Gulf companies. "It is like someone regaining self-confidence," one said.

Economists all but ruled out sovereign borrowing from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which have both previously borrowed globally.

But Bahrain, the least wealthy Gulf state, could be a future candidate for a Eurobond issue, they say. "We need to watch Oman and Bahrain. If any other country in the region is going to issue a Eurobond it will be Bahrain," said Mr. Bu Hulaiga.

"It is more financially open and its financial resources as a government are limited compared to other Gulf states. It needs to expand its infrastructure and is interested in foreign investment in infrastructure projects," he added.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER, AMMAN - SEMESTER											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 21/04/1997											
PART	12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF	NO. OF	VALUE	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE	
STOCK	LOW				TRANS.	SHARES	TRADED	PRICE	PRICE		
269,000	213,000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.56	4	500	128020	256.00	256.00	-	
2,100	1,790	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	6	5843	10571	1.80	1.81	.01+	
5,100	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	13.1	2.83	5	2250	11003	4.90	4.88	.02-	
1,900	1,400	JOR. GULF BANK	4.8	0.00	1	500	405	8.81	8.81	0.00	
2,800	1,380	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	7	0.00	3	1005	1427	1.44	1.41	.02-	
2,850	1,040	BEIT AL-HAL (BETHLA)	7	12.61	2	500	595	1.19	1.19	-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 193.96 %CHG: -0.01											
2,820	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.6	7.18	3	207	346	1.67	1.67	-	
7,500	6,000	WATCO. OWNERS FED.	7.7	5.00	2	500	504	7.00	7.00	-	
.950	.450	JORDAN INTL. TRD.	25.2	0.00	2	350	172	.49	.49	-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 104.19 %CHG: 0.00											
3,710	3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	21.5	2.66	23	7299	27130	3.65	3.76	.11+	
2,500	2,710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	34.4	0.00	8	50000	180000	3.15	3.20	.05+	
6,100	4,950	ANAS POTASH CO.	18.0	3.36	3	2050	12198	5.98	5.95	.03-	
10,400	8,720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.88	10	1315	13346	10.13	10.15	.02+	
3,260	1,650	INDUSTRIAL COIN. AG.	29.4	0.00	7	2400	5271	2.21	2.19	.02-	
4,100	3,040	ANAS PHARM. INDUS.	20.6	5.22	23	5300	19769	3.65	3.76	.11+	
7,250	5,650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.8	3.59	2	250	1763	7.00	7.08	.08+	
2,570	2,050	JORDAN DAIRY	7.6	10.86	1	50	113	2.25	2.25	-	
5,910	4,250	DAB ALDAMAR DV. INV.	13.5	4.04	3	400	4282	.55	.55	-	
.950	.540	NATIDOCAL INDUS.	11.6	0.00	5	7800	1975	2.80	4.95	.15+	
1,370	1,040	ANAS PAPER CONV. TRD.	10.9	6.45	2	500	535	1.09	1.07	.02-	
1,540	.540	NATIDOCAL INDUS.	8.9	10.00	1	1000	600	.60	.60	-	
3,730	2,130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. INFC.	15.4	0.00	2	1250	3131	2.50	2.53	.03+	
1,170	.570	JOR. GULF-CHINA	9	0.00	7	4100	3091	.75	.76	.01+	
1,120	1,270	ANAS PHARM. INDUS.	26.8	0.00	3	1350	1916	1.40	1.43	.03+	
2,650	1,420	UNIV. MOB. INDUS.	4.5	13.61	5	1000	1478	1.49	1.47	.02-	
1,780	1,140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	26.3	8.26	5	1200	1431	1.19	1.21	.02+	
1,230	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	23.9	0.00	19	13100	11568	.88	.88	-	
2,350	1,750	TEL. & CABLE WIRE	9	0.00	3	1550	2744	1.79	1.78	.01-	
1,360	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.9	0.00	1	200	234	1.17	1.17	-	
1,440	.900	UNION CH. & VED.	29.1	0.00	4	1250	1150	.92	.92	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.98 %CHG: +0.77											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 153.26 %CHG: +0.30											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 21/04/1997											
1,790	.440	JOR. TRADE FAC.	12.0	0.00	3	4500	2025	.45	.45	-	
.840	.670	UNION INV. 501	65.1	0.00	1	5000	905	.69	.69	-	
.840	.370	ANAS INV. INVEST.	9	0.00	41	116500	57085	.47	.49	.02+	
.740	.510	ANAS FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	4	70350	39396	.81	.81	-	
.690	.430	ANAS INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	4	2500	1503	.62	.60	.02-	
.400	.720	NATL. BULL. ENV. HANICO	8	0.00	22	36450	23693	.62	.65	.03+	
.670	.430	ANAS ELECT. INDUS.	8	0.00	14	16185	12462	.77	.77	-	
.770	.550	RAL PHARM. 652	8	0.00	5	1346	1588	.52	.53	.01+	
.650	.190	IND. ENG.	25.9	0.00	2	500	4586	.62	.63	.01+	
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	9.1	0.00	2	500	210	.42	.42	-	
.870	.530	NID. EAST COMPLEX	9.1	0.00	13	22750	1742	.76	.78	.02+	
GRAND TOTAL 125 295931 161840											

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

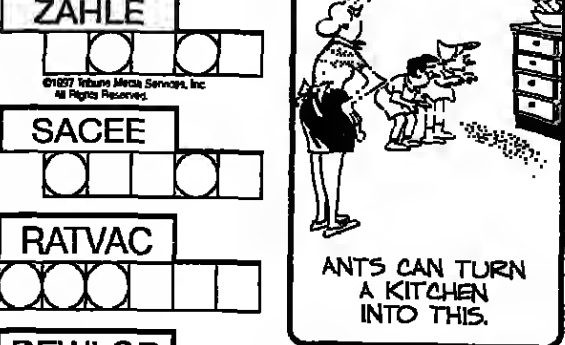


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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Answer here: A (Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: BUSHY AMITY SOOTHE PULPIT
Answer: Working in a stock exchange can be this - THE PITS

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Bullets advance to playoffs with 85-81 win over Cavaliers

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Washington Bullets advanced to the playoffs for the first time since 1988 as Chris Webber had 23 points and 17 rebounds and Juwan Howard sank a clutch jumper in the final seconds of an 85-81 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Webber and Howard, the former fab five teammates at Michigan, stood at half-court in a long, emotional embrace after making the postseason together for the first time since their college days in 1992.

The Cavaliers failed to make the playoffs for the first time in four years under coach Mike Fratello, losing 11 of their final 18 games and finishing two games behind Washington in the race for the final Eastern Conference spot.

The Bullets will play the Chicago Bulls in the first round beginning Friday night.

Trail Blazers 100, Lakers 96: In Portland, Oregon, Shaquille O'Neal missed two free throws with 1.2 seconds left and his team trailing by two points, and Portland went on to defeat Los Angeles and deny the Lakers the Pacific Division title.

The teams will meet again in the first round of the playoffs. Portland won the season series 3-1.

Portland outscored Los Angeles 16-6 over the final five minutes behind the overall play of Arvydas Sabonis and clutch shooting by Isaiah Rider and Rasheed Wallace.

Rider scored 20, Clifford Robinson and Kenny Anderson 18 each and Sabonis 16 for Portland.

Pistons 124, Pacers 120, OT: In Indianapolis, Grant Hill scored nine of his 38 points in overtime as Detroit ruined what was rumored to be Larry Brown's last game as Indiana's head coach.

The Pistons then waited to see who their first-round playoff opponent would be. They started the day one game behind fifth-place Charlotte in the Eastern Conference, but would take over that spot if the Hornets lost Sunday night at Milwaukee.

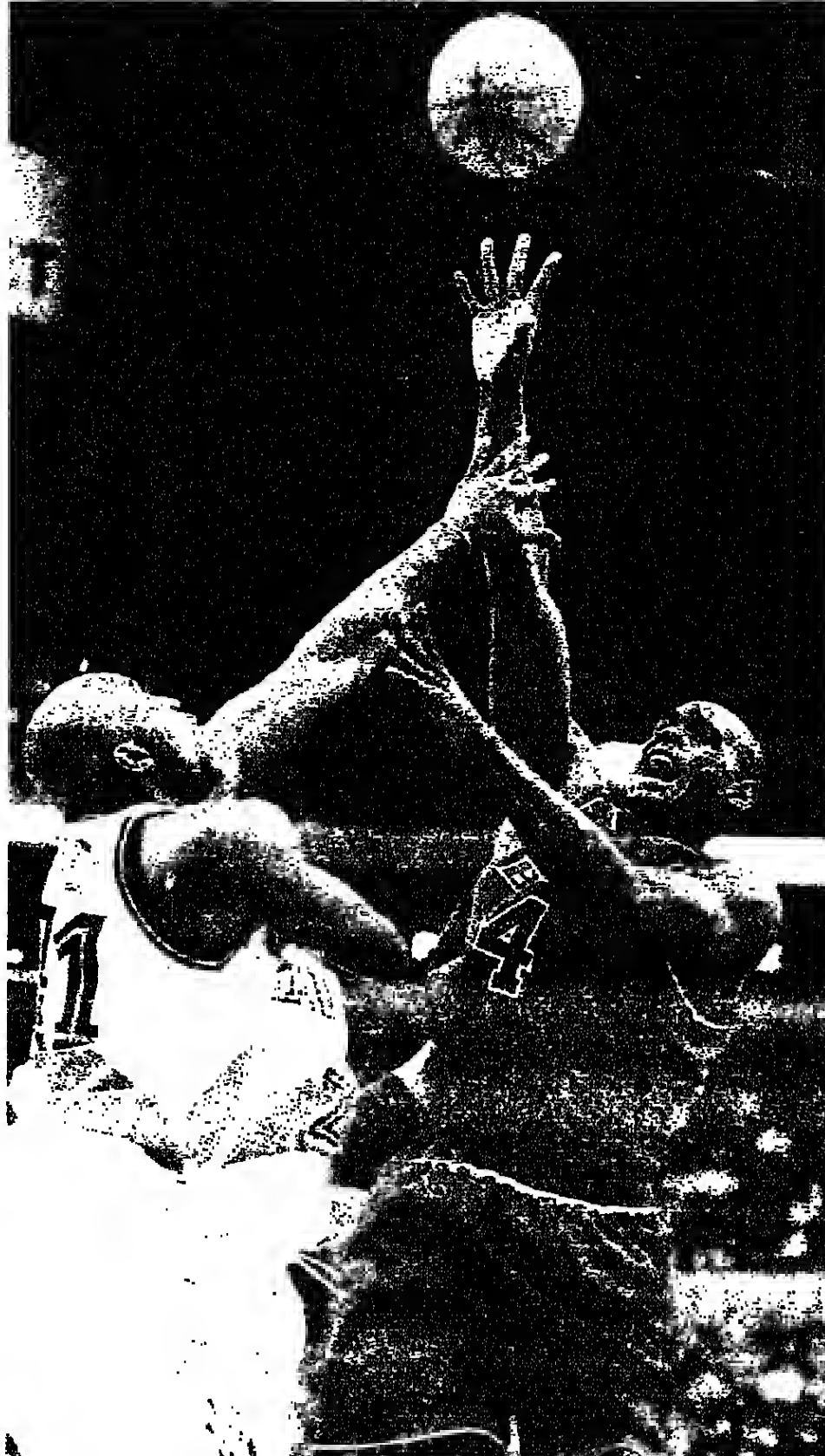
After the game, Brown denied that any decision had been made about his future.

Reggie Miller sent the game into overtime with a running 3-point shot at the buzzer.

Rockets 103, Spurs 99: In San Antonio, the Houston Rockets locked up homecourt advantage through the first two rounds of the playoffs with a victory that ended the Spurs' worst season as an NBA franchise.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 27 points and Charles Barkley added 24 for Houston, which never trailed in the second half but could not pull away.

Houston will be the third seed in the West and will open the playoffs against Minnesota on Thursday night. The Rockets, who



Chris Webber (R), of the Washington Bullets, puts up a shot over the top of Mark West (L), of the Cleveland Cavaliers, at Gund Arena. The Bullets won the game 85-81 to go on to the NBA playoffs for the first time in nine years (Reuters photo)

finished with the same record as the Supersonics, will have the homecourt advantage if they play Seattle in the second round because they won the season series 3-1.

Raptors 125, Celtics 94: In Boston, the Boston Celtics ended the worst season in their storied history as they matched their most lopsided defeat of the year.

Boston finished at 15-67, far worse than the previous team mark for futility of 22-46 in 1949-50. It also is the seventh worst record in NBA history.

Damon Stoudamire scored 32 points against a weak Celtics defense that was at its most porous. The Raptors widened their lead in each quarter, stretching it to as many as 35 points before Boston scored the final four points.

Nets 108, Hawks 92: In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jim Jackson had 25 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists for his second triple-double this month as New

Jersey beat Atlanta.

The win gave John Calipari a 26-56 record in his first season as the Nets coach. The 56 losses were three more than he had in his final seven seasons at Massachusetts.

The Hawks, who only played their starters about half the game, will have the homecourt advantage in the opening round of the playoffs against Detroit.

Reserve forward Alan Henderson led Atlanta with a career-high 19 points and 10 rebounds.

Bucks 120, Hornets 100: In Milwaukee, playoff-bound Charlotte looked

lifeless in its regular season finale, losing by 20 to Milwaukee to drop to the sixth playoff position in the East.

The Hornets will face the New York Knicks in the first round of the playoffs beginning Thursday night. They finished with the same record (54-28) as Detroit, but the Pistons had the tiebreaker edge because they won the season series 3-1.

Vin Baker led Milwaukee with 31 points on 13-of-13 shooting. Armon Gilliam added 23. The Bucks missed the playoffs for the sixth straight season.

RESULTS

Toronto	125	Boston	94
Washington	85	Cleveland	81
Detroit	124	Indiana	120 (OT)
Portland	100	LA Lakers	96
Houston	103	San Antonio	99
New Jersey	108	Atlanta	92
Milwaukee	120	Charlotte	100
Utah	113	Sacramento	109

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Ecclestone and Hill trial dates delayed

IMOLA, Italy (AFP) — Hearings into the Ayrton Senna trial, set for April 24, 28 and 29, have been postponed because of a crowded court calendar, Judge Antonio Costanzo said Monday.

Formula One Constructors Association President Bernie Ecclestone and world champion Damon Hill, Senna's Williams teammate when the Brazilian was killed at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix, were due to have testified on those days.

New trial dates will be made public on May 6.

Frank Williams, whose team will be at Imola on Thursday for the first practice session for Sunday's Grand Prix, is accused of manslaughter, along with his technical director Patrick Head, designer Adrian Newey and three race officials.

Barcelona aim for Euroleague title

ROME (R) — Barcelona, who considered themselves moral victors last year but left empty-handed, bid to take home the trophy this time from Europe's final four basketball championship which begins on Tuesday.

They start favorites to beat Villeurbanne of France and earn the right to play Olympiakos or Ljubljana of Slovenia in Thursday's final.

Only then can the Spanish club lay the ghost of 12 months ago when Panathinaikos took the title amid bitter scenes.

Barcelona lost 67-66 but complained that the Greeks should have been penalised for violating the 30-second shooting rule in the last minute.

The Spaniards were also upset by a crucial block four seconds from time which they argued was irregular because it came after the ball had hit the board behind the net.

FIBA, the international ruling body, acknowledged that "certain errors" had been made by the referees and other officials and the Spanish club accepted the admission as moral compensation.

The disappointment of losing the final seemed to weigh heavily in the early part of this season when Barcelona struggled to qualify for the quarter-finals with a modest 8-8 record from their 16 matches in the Euroleague stages.

But since veteran coach Aito Garcia Reneses signed shaven-headed Serb Sasha Djordjevic in January, Barcelona's fortunes have been transformed and in 11 games the newcomer has moved near the top of the points-scorers' list, averaging 14.4.

This is Barcelona's fifth final four appearance in the nine years of the competition and they may not have a better chance of lifting the crown.

Tuesday's opponents Villeurbanne are newcomers to the big time and although they did well in Euroleague qualifying (12-4), they should find that Barcelona carry too many powerful guns.

Olympiakos arrive in Rome along with their 4,500 supporters on a high after brushing aside champions and bitter rivals Panathinaikos in the quarter-finals.

Few could have forecast the ease with which Olympiakos won the away leg against Panathinaikos and they seem to have put behind them their modest qualifying record (9-7).

Olympiakos have flattered to deceive more than once in the final four but big names such as Dragan Tadic and Panayotis Fasoulas should at least ensure that the Greeks give a good account of themselves.

Olimpija Ljubljana, 10-6 in qualifying, are a young side and something of a surprise package.

Coach Zmago Sagadin, who led Olimpija to 1994 European Cup victory, says: "Our goal was to reach the Euroleague quarter-finals. After managing that a heavy burden was removed from our shoulders and we were able to play in a relaxed fashion."

They relaxed enough to edge past the well-fancied Stefanel Milan to claim their ticket to Rome and could push Olympiakos hard though lack of experience at this level is a big disadvantage.

EUROPEAN SOCCER ROUNDUP

Parma blow chance as Leverkusen and Barcelona win; Nice reach final

LONDON (R) — Parma blew their chance of closing the gap on Italy's Serie A leaders Juventus when they crashed to a surprise 2-0 defeat at the hands of Udinese on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Bayer Leverkusen cut Bayern Munich's lead in the German League to three points and Barcelona regained second spot in Spain with a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

Celtic's 3-0 win over Aberdeen meant Glasgow Rangers had to delay celebrations for their record-equaling ninth consecutive Scottish Championship and Nice booked their place in the French Cup final.

Italy

Parma remain six points adrift of Juventus after Udinese, who beat the leaders last week, added a second high-flying scalp thanks to second-half goals from defender Alessandro Pierini and German international Oliver Bierhoff who converted a penalty.

Germany

In the only game played on Sunday, Bayer Leverkusen stepped up their title campaign with a 2-1 victory over VfB Stuttgart to cut Bayern Munich's lead at the top of the Bundesliga to three points.

Paulo Sergio and Ulf Kirsten got the goals which moved Leverkusen three points clear in second place ahead of champions Borussia Dortmund with six games to play.

Spain

Goals from Ronaldo and Abelardo Fernandez gave Barcelona a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao and carried them into second spot seven points behind Real Madrid.

Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo kept Deportivo in the chase for Europe next season with both goals in the 2-1 win at Logrones, one of them from the penalty spot, while troubled champions Atletico Madrid stayed in the hunt for a UEFA Cup place with a 3-1 victory over Valladolid.

Scotland

Two goals from

Portuguese striker Jorge Cadete and one from Simon Donnelly kept alive Celtic's slim hopes in the Scottish championship as they beat Aberdeen 3-0 on Sunday.

The win leaves Celtic nine points behind arch-rivals Glasgow Rangers who, with three games remaining, need just a single point to clinch a record-equaling ninth successive crown.

France

Nice booked their place in the French Cup final with a lone strike from Thierry de Neef in the 33rd minute enough to sink Second Division Laval.

In the final at Parc des Princes on May 10 they will face Guingamp who beat Montpellier 2-0 after extra time in the other semifinal on Saturday.

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Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AA6 Uvoid QJ 108765 AA3543

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	7	Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 2 - North-South vulnerable. South deals.

4QJ CA8 CQJ6642 4KQ7

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
7	Pass	2♣	Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AAEQ104 AJ652 Q85 43

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AAEQJ785 Q79 Q88 AA6

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

4QJ975 Q88 4EQ107 4J9

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	2♣	Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 6 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AAEQ82 CQJ85 QK83 46

Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

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PLAZA

Eddie Murphyin

METRO

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CONCORD "2"

Michael Jordan...in

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Stuttgart sell Elber to Bayern

STUTTGART (R) — VFB Stuttgart said Monday their Brazilian striker Giovane Elber would join Bayern Munich in the close season and Nigerian Jonathan Akpoborie would replace him.

Stuttgart President Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder said the club were still negotiating the exact transfer fee for Elber but it would be more than 10 million marks (\$5.8 million).

Elber is expected to slot into Juergen Klinsmann's position at Bayern. The German captain has decided to leave the club at the end of the season, although he has yet to decide where he will go. Italy's Parma are among the possibilities.

The exact fee for Akpoborie depends on the fate of his current club Hansa Rostock.

According to his contract, Stuttgart will pay five million marks (\$2.9 million) if the east German club stay in the Bundesliga and four million marks (\$2.3 million) if they are relegated. Rostock are currently one point above the relegation zone.

Elber and Akpoborie are two of the most exciting strikers in the Bundesliga. The Brazilian, who is keen to improve his chances of playing for his country by moving to Germany's highest-profile club, has scored 16 league goals this season.



American Misty Hyman competes in the women's 200 metres backstroke at the world short-course swimming championships in Gothenburg. Chen Yan of China won the race ahead of Hyman in two minutes 07.50 seconds (Reuters photo)

Bruguera has easy start in Monte Carlo Open

MONTE CARLO (R) — Sergi Bruguera, who hopes 1997 will be the year of his return to the top, had a perfect start to the Monte Carlo Open on Monday, easing past compatriot Javier Sanchez in straight sets.

The 26-year-old Spaniard, winner here in 1991 and 1993, dismissed Sanchez 6-4 6-1 and said he still found it hard to adapt to the slow surface after months on hardcourt.

"It is very hard to be patient enough, to get the right discipline on clay. You always want to finish points quickly," he said to explain a pedestrian start to the game.

The 1993 and 1994 French Open champion, seeded 16th, trailed Sanchez 2-0 at first but soon recovered to level at 3-3 and win the first set at the net.

The second set was a tennis lesson as Bruguera outpaced his rival to hand him his third defeat in this third clash between the two Spaniards this season.

"There must be 18 or 19 of us on the circuit so it is only natural that we should meet often between Spaniards," said Bruguera, whose game suffered last season following an operation.

Spaniards will be among the favourites in this year's Monte Carlo tournament with 12 of them in the



Sergi Bruguera draw, half of them seeds. Four Spaniards played the semifinals of the Barcelona Open last week. Bruguera, who surged back in key Biscayne this season, losing only in the final to Austrian Thomas Muster, hopes he will be the one who makes the best impression here. "I've worked very hard to be back at my best after the worst season of my career. Hopefully, this season I will play as well as in the past," he said.

Orioles romp 11-1 over Boston as Seattle trounce Minnesota in American League Cubs finally win a game as Giants beat Marlins in National League

BOSTON (R) — Jeffrey Hammonds and Rafael Palmeiro hit two-run doubles in a six-run fourth inning to power the streaking Baltimore Orioles to an 11-1 win over the Boston Red Sox on Sunday.

The Orioles, who exploded for 15 hits off six pitchers, have won seven of their last eight games and own the best record in the American League at 11-3.

"We have better pitching. We have better chemistry and we have better defence than last year," said Palmeiro, who drove in a third run with a bases-loaded walk in the ninth.

"When you have all those you are going to win some games."

Jimmy Key improved to 3-0 in four starts, allowing one run and five hits in 5-2/3 innings.

In Chicago, Tony Phillips drew the third consecutive walk from Brian Boehringer to force in the winning run as the Chicago White Sox squandered a five-run lead before edging the New York Yankees, 8-7, in 11 innings.

It was the second time in four days that the Yankees lost a game on a bases-loaded walk.

Boehringer retired the first two batters before Ron Karkovics doubled off the left-field wall. Ozzie Guillen, Ray Durham and Phillips then were given free passes as the White Sox won for just the second time in their last eight games.

Phillips, who had taken a called third strike two innings earlier, drew a 3-1 count on Boehringer before asking second-base umpire Rick Reed to move. The request drew an angry response from first-base umpire and crew chief John Shulock, and after a delay of several minutes, Boehringer threw a pitch low and outside to force home Karkovics.

In Cleveland, Chad Curtis broke a tie with a leadoff homer in the sixth inning and the Cleveland Indians took advantage of some shoddy defence by the Milwaukee Brewers for a 6-4 victory.

Orel Hershiser allowed

six hits over 6-2/3 innings for the Indians, who benefited from three errors by the Brewers.

"We made Hershiser look great," Brewers manager Phil Garner said. "We were impatient hitters, swinging at bad pitches, especially when we grounded into two key double plays."

In Detroit, Mike Moehler pitched seven-plus innings and Tony Clark hit a three-run homer in a five-run first as the Detroit Tigers beat the Oakland Athletics 9-2.

Damon Easley and Brian Hunter added solo homers for Detroit, which snapped a four-game losing streak.

Moehler (1-0) allowed two runs and eight hits with one walk and three strikeouts.

In Kansas City, Jason Dickson tossed a three-hitter and Tim Lincecum had RBI as the Anaheim Angels pounded the Kansas City Royals, 11-1, to halt a three-game losing streak.

Staked to a 5-0 lead in the first inning, Dickson retired the first 11 batters he faced before Jay Bell hit a two-out double in the fourth.

"My fastball and change-up were working together, I was keeping them off-balance," Dickson said. "I'm not going to overpower anybody."

In Seattle, Ken Griffey hit his league-leading ninth

homer and drove in three runs, and Norm Charlton retired the final four batters to notch his fifth save as the Seattle Mariners salvaged the finale of a three-game series by defeating the Minnesota Twins, 10-6.

Griffey, who tied Colorado's Larry Walker for the Major-League lead, also drew a bases-loaded walk in the eighth inning.

At Texas, Dean Palmer homered twice, including his sixth career grand slam, and drove in five runs and Ivan Rodriguez added a homer and two RBIs, powering the Texas Rangers to a 10-5 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays.

Palmer hit his first home run of the game and third of the season, a solo shot, in the second off starter Juan Guzman (2-2) to pull Texas within 3-2. His grand slam an inning later gave the Rangers a 6-3 lead.

Cubs stop the bleeding at 14 games

The Chicago Cubs finally won a game.

The Cubs shook the bear off their backs by beating the New York Mets 4-3 in the second game of a doubleheader on Sunday.

The victory ended the second-worst season-opening losing streak in Major-League history at 14

games.

The Cubs' Kevin Foster allowed one run and four hits over 6-1/3 strong innings and Rey Sanchez's RBI single snapped a six-inning tie.

"It has been really hard," Foster said. "Everybody has been pressing."

Jose Hernandez and Kevin Orie added RBI hits in the seventh for Chicago, whose starting lineup featured just one player hitting above .216 — first baseman Mark Grace.

Chicago's 14 losses to open the season was second only to the 1988 Baltimore Orioles, who lost their first 21 games.

The Mets handed the Cubs that 14th loss with an 8-2 drubbing in the first game, which was highlighted by Carl Everett hitting home runs from both sides of the plate, including a grand slam.

At Colorado, Darren Holmes allowed one run in six innings in his first Major-League start and John Vander Wal drove in three runs as the Colorado Rockies defeated the Atlanta Braves 9-2 on Sunday.

Holmes had made 319 career relief appearances. He surrendered five hits and struck out five.

"It was his first Major-

League start and you throw him against the Atlanta Braves," Rockies manager Don Baylor said.

In Los Angeles, Craig Biggio homered twice and drove in all three runs and rookie Chris Holt allowed one run over seven innings as the Houston Astros topped the Los Angeles Dodgers 3-1 to take the rubber game of their three-game series.

Biggio opened the scoring in the third inning with his second homer of the season, a solo shot off starter Ismael Valdes. He snapped a 1-1 tie in the eighth with a two-run shot off reliever Tom Candiotti.

Raul Mondesi bit home run for Los Angeles.

In Philadelphia, the Montreal Expos took a double header from the Phillies, 5-1 and 3-0.

In the first game, Jeff Juden and Dave Veres combined on a three-hitter and Mark Grudzielanek doubled in two runs.

Bobby Munoz (0-4) became the first four-game loser in the National League and is winless in his last 15 starts since July 27th, 1994.

In the second game, Pedro Martinez allowed five hits in 7-1/3 innings, and F.P. Santangelo had two hits and scored two

runs for the Expos' victory.

In Pittsburgh, Kevin Young drove in three runs, including a two-run single in the fifth, and Jon Lieber pitched seven strong innings for his first win of the season, leading the Pittsburgh Pirates to a 5-3 victory over the Cincinnati Reds.

Young had a sacrifice fly in the first inning against Reds starter Kent Mercker (1-2) and his two-run single in the fifth off reliever Ricky Bones extended Pittsburgh's lead to 5-2.

In Honolulu, Quilvio Vera and Ken Caminiti

each had two hits and two RBIs as the San Diego Padres salvaged the final game of their three-game series in Hawaii with an 8-2 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals.

The game closed out the series at Honolulu's Aloha Stadium, which has not been used for baseball in 15 years. The three-game series drew 77,432.

In San Francisco, Osvaldo Fernandez and three relievers combined on a seven-hitter, and Jeff Kent and Rick Wilkins had sacrifice flies as the red-hot San Francisco Giants posted their ninth straight win with a 2-0 blanking of the Florida Marlins.

Fernandez (2-1) held Florida to five hits with a walk and a strikeout over seven innings. He is 3-1 with a 1.21 era lifetime against the Marlins.

The Giants' 13-3 start is their best in 59 years.

RESULTS

American League		
Baltimore	11	Boston 1
Cleveland	6	Milwaukee 4
Detroit	9	Oakland 2
Chicago	8	New York 7 (11 Inn)
Anaheim	11	Kansas City 1
Texas	10	Toronto 5
Seattle	10	Minnesota 6
National League		
Montreal	5	Philadelphia 1 (1st Gm)
Montreal	3	Philadelphia 0 (2nd Gm)
Pittsburgh	5	Cincinnati 3
Colorado	9	Atlanta 2
Houston	3	Los Angeles 1
San Francisco	2	Florida 0
NY Mets	8	Chicago Cubs 2 (1st Gm)
Chicago Cubs	4	NY Mets 3 (2nd Gm)
San Diego	8	St Louis 2

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Sudan signs peace pact with four rebel groups

Bashir sends envoy to Ethiopia

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese military government has prepared to sign a peace agreement with four armed southern factions at the Republican Palace here late Monday afternoon, media reports said.

An accord has been reached between the junta and the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), the Bahr el Ghazal group of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Independence Movement (Bor Group) and the Equatoria Defence Force.

All four factions broke away from the mainstream SPLA between 1991 and 1995. The SPLA, led by Colonel John Garang, has persistently turned down peace overtures by the government and has joined the northern opposition in fighting central government forces in eastern and southern Sudan.

According to Um Durman Radio and local newspapers, Monday's pact will be signed at a ceremony attended by delegates from "sisterly and friendly" countries and international and regional bodies, including the Organisation of African Unity, the Arab League, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the East African Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development.

The four factions ceased fighting against the government in April last year when they signed a document known as the "political charter". They even recently declared that they sent men to the battlegrounds on the government side to fight their former rebel allies.

The peace agreement provides for a referendum on self-determination of southern Sudan and unity with the

north after a four-year interim period during which a 25-member coordinating council is to run affairs in the south.

This council, according to the agreement, will be made up of the current walis (governors) of the 10 southern states, with the chairman and deputy chairman and other members to be appointed by the president of the republic.

General Omar al-Bashir, in addition to representatives of the signatory factions.

The number of representatives of the factions has not yet been declared.

The agreement also stipulates that Islam and traditional practices will be the sources of legislation in Sudan with individual states free to add laws of a special nature to the national legislation.

It regards Arabic as the first official language and English as the second.

Al Sudan Al Hadith reported that in addition to official delegates, invitations have been extended to 27 international television networks and broadcasting services, news agencies and newspapers to cover the signing ceremony.

The ceremony will first be addressed by Mohammad Ali Amin Khalifa, the secretary general of the Supreme Council for Peace, and then the leaders of the factions will sign the document.

Following that, General Bashir will deliver a speech, the local media said.

According to the Sudan News Agency, General Bashir will hold a press conference on Tuesday regarding implementation of the agreement.

The SPLA has been fighting since 1983 to end domination of the mainly animist and Christian south by the

Arabised north, where Islamists back the regime.

Meanwhile, a senior Sudanese official has arrived in the Ethiopian capital on a secret trip to reconcile the two countries, the official Egyptian news agency (MENA) and an Arabic language newspaper said Sunday.

The envoy, Al Fateh Orwa, Sudan's ambassador to the United Nations, arrived in Addis Ababa Saturday with a handwritten message from Sudan's president, General Omar al-Bashir, to the Ethiopian prime minister, MENA and the Al Hayat newspaper said.

The contents of the letter to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi were not revealed.

The mission is to "clear the atmosphere between the two neighbours and resolve their disputes," the London-based newspaper said, quoting unnamed sources in Addis Ababa.

MENA, quoting diplomatic sources in the Ethiopian capital, said Sudan wants Zenawi to mediate with Sudanese rebels to end their campaign to topple the Islamist government in Sudan.

The two countries have long accused each other of supporting rebel groups within their borders, and Sudan has said that Ethiopia has launched recent attacks against Sudanese towns.

Ethiopia has also charged that Sudan orchestrated the 1995 assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. Sudan denies involvement in the attack.



INDIAN PILGRIMS RETURN HOME: Indian pilgrims returning from the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia weep as they are greeted by relatives at the Mumbai (Bombay) airport, on Sunday. Indian officials estimate that 281 Indians are still missing after the fire swept through a tent complex at a key pilgrimage site in Saudi Arabia last Tuesday, killing 343 people and injuring more than 1,500 (Reuters photo)

Uganda holds over 100 Sudanese prisoners of war

NGOMOROMO (AFP) — Ugandan troops are holding more than 100 Sudanese government soldiers as prisoners of war at this army post just four kilometres south of the border — clear proof of fighting between the two armies.

Along with the Sudanese prisoners are 64 Ugandan rebels, many of them skeletal after months of drought.

The Kampala and Khartoum governments both deny that their own troops are crossing the frontier.

Ugandan army officers said Sunday that the Sudanese troops invaded Uganda near here last Monday at Lalabor, in Kitgum district, alongside Ugandan rebels in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

They were trying to establish a base to continue attacks within Uganda, they said, while showing reporters the emaciated LRA prisoners.

Ugandan Minister of State for Defence Amama Mubambi told AFP earlier that the attack had been carried out by two companies of Sudanese troops fighting beside the LRA guerrillas, and that Ugandan troops had killed 60 Sudanese soldiers and 68 rebels.

The LRA has been fighting in northern Uganda for the past 10 years in a bid to overthrow President Yoweri Museveni and replace his government with one based on the Biblical 10 Commandments.

It operates, with the backing of Sudanese army troops, from rear bases in southern Sudan which are being overrun by Sudanese rebels fighting to overthrow their own government in Khartoum.

Reports indicate that the Sudanese rebels have recently killed or captured hundreds of Ugandan rebels in the LRA and the West Nile Bank Front, another Ugandan rebel group.

Mr. Mubambi acknowledged on Thursday that two Ugandan soldiers belonging to an intelligence unit were "missing inside Sudan."

Those missing soldiers were seeking details on the LRA's leader, Joseph Kony, a former Roman Catholic catechist, he told AFP.

Yemen's ruling coalition frays ahead of next week's elections

ADEN (AP) — Yemen's ruling party on Monday accused its junior coalition partner of shooting dead one of its officials, underscoring tensions ahead of next week's elections.

The General People's Congress Party (GPCP) said that one of its candidates, Ahmad Abdul Qader Basha, was killed by members of the Islah Party in the southern province of Ibb.

On Sunday, the Islamic Islah Party (IIP) accused Mr. Basha of shooting to death one of its candidates and wounding several others.

The clashes stem from a power struggle between the two parties, which are vying for influence in the 501-member parliament.

Parliament speaker Sheikh Abdullah Al Ahmar, the powerful head of the IIP, on Sunday decided to partici-

pate in the April 27 elections after having earlier withdrawn his candidacy because of tensions within the ruling coalition.

Four opposition parties are boycotting the elections and the campaign has been marred by accusations of intimidation. Several dissidents have been arrested.

Since 1990, there has been an uneasy unification between north Yemen and south Yemen — which were two separate countries until then.

In 1994, the unified government, led by northerners, crushed an Aden-based revolt in the south that led to a two-month long civil war.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh's ruling GPCP and its junior coalition partner, the IIP, have controlled the government for the past four years. They are expected to win a majority again.

The opposition, led by the Socialist Party, has accused the government of widespread fraud and intimidation. The opposition wants more autonomy for the south and a general amnesty for those who participated in the civil war. The Socialist Party headed the 1994 revolt.

The government began beefing up security here last month after the opposition called for the boycott.

In Aden, the former capital of the south and the opposition's stronghold, about 5,000 troops and 1,000 tanks have been deployed in advance of the polls.

Yemen, a poor nation of about 17 million people, is largely a tribal country where carrying heavy machine-guns or lighter weapons is part of the daily way of life.

Globalisation of data explored at Columbia

AMMAN (J.T.) — The impact of the accelerating globalisation of information on the promotion of peace, development, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the twenty-first century will be explored in a three-day international roundtable from April 21 - 24 at Columbia University, the U.N. said in a press release.

The Roundtable on Communication for the Promotion of Peace, Development, Democracy and Respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Global Village will be attended by approximately 40 senior media practitioners, industry executives, communications theorists and policymakers from around the world.

It is funded with extra-budgetary grants from the government of the Netherlands, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Panels will be held on each day of the roundtable,

addressing such topics as: global issues and the power of information; new media and technologies; global access and global good; independent and pluralistic media; new media — prospects and problems; and promoting global issues. The roundtable will discuss efforts to further expand and consolidate the realm of independent and pluralistic media and the contribution of new and existing media across frontiers to the betterment of the human condition in the coming millennium.

Participants will include: George Hawatmeh, editor, Jordan Times; Radwan Abu Ayyash, president of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation; Abdul Aziz Al Saqqaf, editor of the Yemen Times; Walter Bender, associate director from Information Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Media Laboratory; James William Carey, professor, Columbia University School of Journalism; Douglas A. Chalmers, professor of polit-

ical science and international affairs, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs; Dominique Dhombrès, editorialist on cultural issues, Le Monde, France.

Also participating will be: Kanak Mani Dixit, editor, Himal, Nepal; Gwen Lister, editor, The Namibian; Mokone Matabane, co-chair, Independent Broadcasting Authority, South Africa; Pius Njawa, editor, Le Messager, Cameroon; Martin Palous, professor, Centre for Theoretical Study, Charles University, Czech Republic; Greg Riker, director, Advanced Consumer Technology, Microsoft Corporation; Gertrude Robinson, professor, McGill University, Canada; Philippe-Olivier Rousseau, member, Conseil Supérieur de l'Audioprofession, France; Felipe Sabagun, professor, Madrid University, Spain.

Top Arab singer, Fairouz, honoured by Jacques Chirac

BEIRUT (AFP) — Fairouz, the most famous living singer in the Arab World, was decorated on Monday with a medal of honour from French President Jacques Chirac.

She received the medal, Chevalier Dans l'Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur, in a reception hosted by French Ambassador Jean Pierre Lafon at the French embassy in Beirut's eastern suburb of Martakia.

"Chirac wanted to honour the great voice of Lebanon, the great voice of the Arab World, whose prestige spreads well

beyond the borders of the Middle East," said Mr. Lafon in a statement.

"Fairouz has rallied around her all the Lebanese without exception," said Mr. Lafon.

The Lebanese singer refused to perform in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 civil war in order not to be seen as siding with any party in the conflict.

She finally held a concert in 1994 at the historic Martyrs' Square, at the heart of Beirut's war devastated downtown area which separated Christian and Muslim sectors of the capital during the civil strife.



Supermodel refuses alcohol in Latin America

SANTIAGO (AFP) — German supermodel Claudia Schiffer arrived Sunday for three days of promotions and ordered she not be served any alcohol in Latin America's wine country. The catwalk star, who came from Lima, Peru, has scheduled television appearances, a fashion show and a magazine photo shoot. During her stay in Chile, which she last visited a year ago, Schiffer has requested a strict diet that excludes red meat and alcohol, according to the hotel where she is staying. The trip is part of a seven-country tour of Latin America that also includes Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

Clinton jokes about Dole loan

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton was quick to joke about House Speaker Newt Gingrich's decision to pay a Congress imposed \$300,000 fine with a loan from former Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole. "I was thinking of calling Senator Dole this afternoon. You know, Chelsea (Clinton) is about to go off to college," Clinton quipped to a White House news conference.

Fergie makes her availability known

LONDON (AFP) — The Duchess of York has made it known she is romantically available and not pining for her ex-husband, Prince Andrew. "I think it's very important people realise that I am divorced and single," Fergie, 37, told Britain's OK! magazine. "I'm concerned people will make out that I am going back to my husband when, quite frankly, I'm not. I've been out on a couple of dates."

Burglar robs wrong building

HONG KONG (AP) — A newly arrived illegal immigrant from China chose the wrong building to burgle. He broke into a Hong Kong police officer's flat. A police spokesman said on Monday constable Cheung Sui-Chung arrested the 25-year-old burglar and recovered his wallet containing his police warrant card and more than H.K. 2,500 (\$320) in cash.

Timothy Leary to take ultimate trip into space

MADRID (AP) — Timothy Leary, the 1960s guru of LSD and 1990s icon of the Internet, will take the ultimate trip on Monday when his ashes are blasted into space with a Spanish satellite. The cremated remains of Leary, whose final request before dying was for "one last far-out trip," will be launched into orbit with those of "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry and others for the world's first space funeral. The ashes, in sealed vials, will be sent to Spain's first satellite into orbit via a Pegasus rocket to be launched over the Canary Islands on Monday. The capsules each containing seven grammes of remains will be released into space and will orbit the Earth for anywhere between 18 months and 10 years before gravity pulls them back into the atmosphere where they will burn up. Leary urged a generation of Americans to get high on LSD so they could "turn on, tune in and drop out," and was fired from Harvard in 1963 for involving students in his mindbending drug experiments. He later became an early devotee of the Internet, calling it the LSD of the next century.

Greek minister pours cold water over better relations with Turkey

ATHENS (AFP) — The recent thawing of relations between arch-rivals Greece and Turkey received a new deep-freeze treatment from Greek Foreign Minister Theodore Pangalos in an interview published Sunday.

Turkey still has "an empire mentality," the Turks "want to dominate and expand. Greece cannot accept that," Mr. Pangalos told the weekly To Vima.

While saying he had "no problem" participating in helping Turkey get closer to Europe, it would only be on condition that it "doesn't claim Greek territories," changes its position on the divided island of Cyprus and revises its human rights record.

And as for European Union (EU) membership: "I'm sure I won't be seeing that membership in my lifetime," he said, adding it would not be possible "over the next 20 years."

He said an armed conflict in the Aegean Sea "would be an act of insanity impossible under a normal democratic government."

A dispute over the sovereignty of a number of Aegean islets brought the two countries to the brink of war early last year.

Mr. Pangalos is due to arrive in Istanbul on April 30 for a meeting bringing together the foreign ministers of 11 countries in the Black Sea region, the Turkish Anadolu news agency reported Thursday.

While direct talks with Turkish authorities were not on the agenda, the agency said he could have informal talks with his Turkish counterpart Tansu Ciller.

A Dutch delegation, representing the EU, has recently been attempting to bring the two countries together.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo said Thursday that enough progress had been made to qualify as a "breakthrough."

Athens had even proposed a joint commission of Greek and Turkish experts study areas of tension. But Greek Foreign Deputy Minister Yorgos Kranidiotis told another Greek newspaper, Ethnos, that "such a commission doesn't represent political dialogue, nor arbitration, but just an improvement in the atmosphere" between the two countries.

And he echoed his superior's comments, saying "Greek-Turkish relations have been damaged by Turkey's aggression in the Aegean and by the occupation of Cyprus."

Swiss Jews concerned over campaign saying Bern's aid is 'blackmail'

BASLE (AFP) — Switzerland's Jewish community on Monday expressed concern over a campaign mounted by a right-wing party which has characterised Bern's decision to aid Holocaust victims as "blackmail."

"This could lead to a rise in anti-semitism. We are very worried. This is a dangerous campaign," said Jewish Community Federation Vice-President Thomas Lyssy.

The Swiss People's Party, one of four in Switzerland's governing coalition, launched a campaign this week in the media and the streets of Zurich, the bastion of populist politician Christoph Blocher, to try to swing public opinion against the government's proposal for a humanitarian founda-

tion. "Blackmail the Swiss people," asks a political cartoon, adding "a U.S. lawyer insults Switzerland," and an "over-seas organisation wants money."

"And the people should pay — never, never, never," the text says.

Switzerland's Jewish community has not decided how to react to this provocation. The publicity cannot be legally questioned because it avoids particular mention of Jews, Mr. Lyssy said.

There is also the risk that drawing attention to the campaign will heighten its impact.

The Swiss will vote in a referendum next year at the earliest on the creation of a seven billion Swiss francs (\$5

billion) foundation announced in March by the government as a way to restore the country's battered reputation.

Bern and Swiss banks have been accused of profiteering from dealings with Hitler's Nazi regime during World War II.

The foundation would aid sufferers of injustice, poverty and genocide campaigns as well as Holocaust survivors or their heirs. Half the funds would be channelled abroad.

A separate fund composed of 265 million Swiss francs financed by banks, industry and the central bank will be established specifically to compensate families of Holocaust victims.